International Pharmacy Rotation in Belize

By Greg Garcia, Pharm.D., CCP Class of 2016

Just prior to my recent graduation from the Chicago College of Pharmacy, I had the amazing opportunity to complete an elective rotation in southern Belize. I was both excited and nervous to travel abroad, especially with the growing concerns regarding the Zika virus. I joined other health profession students from various states along with supervising health professionals to provide health services to the people in rural areas of Belize where healthcare is inaccessible. Our group consisted of medical, physician assistant (PA), pharmacy, and physical therapy (PT) students.

Hillside International is the organization that coordinates such efforts and has a location in the village of Eldridgeville, which is just outside of Punta Gorda. When we arrived at Hillside, we were each assigned to a bedroom and a roommate for the next four weeks, and we were given a schedule that would rotate us between the Hillside Clinic, mobile clinics, polyclinic, and home health visits. We also were required to attend lectures at the education center about two times per week. Our first lecture was an introduction to the country.

Belize is a small country that shares borders with Mexico, Guatemala, and Honduras. Being a former British colony, Belize is the only country in Central America that does not recognize Spanish as the national language. Just more than 300,000 people are living in this beautiful country. Belize is truly a melting pot of languages, ethnicities, and cultures: Mayans, Creoles, Mestizos, East Indians, Garinagu, Mennonites, and Chinese, just to name a few. I had the opportunity to interact with people in each of these groups, and I was able to learn how their ancestors came to live in Belize.

At the Hillside Clinic, the patients lived in the surrounding towns. An incoming patient was triaged by the staff, and then a medical or PA student would perform an examination. My job was to verify the appropriateness of prescriptions, make recommendations, answer clinical questions, counsel, and administer contraceptive injections, all under the supervision of professional staff.

The mobile clinics had the same set-up, but the key difference was that we drove anywhere from one to three hours to remote Mayan villages in the jungle. This was my favorite clinic to attend, and it was the most difficult. The heat, humidity, sweat, rain, vegetation, dirt roads, high patient volume, limited medical supply, and the language and culture barriers were some of the challenges we faced when providing

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A Student’s Perspective: Making the Most of Your Time at Pharmacy School

By Greg Hakala, Third-year Pharmacy Student

The main goal of leadership is to inspire like-minded individuals to work together towards a set objective. In order to do this, you need to be friendly, determined, and willing to go beyond the required duties. Over the past two-and-half-years of pharmacy school, I have been striving to improve myself while encouraging others to do the same. There is no end to what you can accomplish and improvements can always be made.

As a student in pharmacy school, you have two choices: scurry home right after class to study, or become involved with the school’s organizations and make the best of your time there. Although the second option may involve less free time and seemingly living out of your car at times, it is far more rewarding and enjoyable. Over the past year, I served as President for two student organizations: Pharmacy Student Council and Underserved Medicine. At first, I was slightly nervous about the added responsibilities. However, after a couple of weeks I learned to work with each as a team and depend on the leadership of my fellow executive board members of each organization.

The main objective as president is to lead the group towards the general goal of the organization. This could include helping with any of the positions, keeping meetings on track, listening to different viewpoints and even making the tough decisions when members of the group may not agree. The interpersonal skills you learn as a leader and willingness to go beyond the required duties are not easily found in a classroom.

There are many other ways to get involved at school. During my years in college I have come to learn the significance of volunteering and creating a lasting impression for our generation. This may include tutoring other students, advocating for the profession at the state capitol, or even working with community members on medication adherence and healthcare awareness. Pharmacy is evolving in many ways, and it is our responsibility to lead the transition and show people all that pharmacists can do.

As a student, you will come to find out how friendly everyone is when you show your dedication to the profession. The network you build may be essential to advancing in your career. Pharmacy is a small world. You never know who might eventually interview you or write a letter of recommendation for you. The best decision I made at Midwestern University is getting involved in the organizations and taking on leadership roles that have helped me to grow as a person. Take the leap, and get involved!

Rotation in Belize

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care to the patients. The villages near the Guatemalan border sat on top of rolling hills and provided beautiful views. The children were always curious and bashful. The adults were reserved and gave minimal eye contact. Nevertheless, the Mayans were always grateful and patient. Seeing the living conditions of the Mayans was truly humbling. The Mayans live in huts made of wood and roofed with weaved palm tree leaves. The children usually walked barefoot on the dirt floors and multiple family members would share a bed or hammock, both of which were common causes of infection and transmission.

In the hospital, I would mostly help with counseling and verifying of medications. The home visits were also memorable. I went with a medical student and a nurse. We went into patients’ homes, performed exams, delivered medications, and answered questions. The medical students would also perform dressing changes on foot wounds. Going into homes of patients is something that I’ll never forget; the poverty in Belize is eye-opening.

After clinic hours, our group of students would relax in the hammocks, go on the six-mile bike ride into town, play basketball and soccer with the locals, and cook family style dinners. I was fortunate enough to be with a group that got along well and bonded. On the weekends, we would go on trips around the country and Guatemala. We travelled there to visit the Mayan ruins of Tikal, we explored the ancient Actun Tunichil Muknal caves, we relaxed in the beach town of Placencia, we went snorkeling and fishing off one of the cayes, and we wandered through the difficult currents in Blue Creek Cave.

This rotation helped me grow as a pharmacist. I am glad to have gone through this experience, and I hope to one day precept pharmacy students in a developing country such as Belize.

Editor’s Note: CCP is continuing to expand student opportunities for international rotations.

Our work environment changed each day. Here we are in a vacant room attached to a school building that was powered by three car batteries. In the bags are all the medications, separated by treatment (i.e. heart, infectious diseases, gastrointestinal). After discussing the treatment plan with the medical students, we would take the prescription and write out labels for the medications. We would then counsel the patients.
Revised Pharm.D. Curriculum at CCP

First year students enrolling in the fall of 2016 at the Chicago College of Pharmacy (CCP) will begin a revised Pharm.D. curriculum, based on the new standards set by the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE). To meet the new standards and to enhance the curriculum, CCP revised the Pharm.D. curriculum, which includes these major changes:

**Professional Development Course Sequence** will focus on leadership, professionalism, self-awareness, and innovation and entrepreneurship.

**Clinical Skills and Simulation Course Sequence** will focus on clinical skill development such as communication skills, physical assessment skills, point of care testing, and will utilize standardized patients in the University’s Clinical Skills and Simulation Center.

The new **Interprofessional Education II** offers pharmacy students additional opportunities to interact with students from other MWU colleges, as they practice communicating and collaborating as a healthcare team to deliver patient care.

In addition, the number of elective hours needed has been reduced, and students will now start their Advanced Pharmacy Practice Experience (APPE) rotations in the spring quarter of their third year. Students will continue to have two summers free, so they can take advantage of summer internships and research opportunities to augment their resumes with real-world experiences.

One of the key advantages for students in the new curriculum is that they will graduate at the end of their final rotation in February. This will allow them to get a head start in their job search or better prepare for their upcoming residencies. To view the new curriculum, please visit our Website at [www.midwestern.edu](http://www.midwestern.edu).

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**Annual Student Award Night**

In April, more than 50 awards totaling nearly $40,000 were awarded to almost 40 CCP students at the Annual Student Award Night. In addition, 33 students were initiated into Rho Chi, which recognizes academic and professional achievements. Phi Lambda Sigma also initiated 11 students who were recognized for their achievements in leadership. Pictured are the four students who received scholarships from Walgreens representatives. Congratulations to all of our students who were recognized for their academic and professional achievements in pharmacy.

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**CCP Student Becomes Chair of APhA-ASP Communications Committee**

Third-year pharmacy student, Eileen Hang, has been appointed to Chair of the Communications Committee in the American Pharmacists Association’s Academy of Student Pharmacists (APhA-ASP). For the past year, she has served as one of the student appointees to this committee. As part of her new role, she recently traveled to Washington, D.C. to meet with her Committee members in person and collectively plan for their goals in the year ahead.

"Last year, we laid a lot of groundwork for our initiatives, so I was able to use my previous experience to teach this year’s team about our current operations and ensure that we have a strong foundation moving forward," explains Ms. Hang. "This meeting really gave us a chance to share ideas in person. It’s astounding that the five of us will be carrying out the work of the Academy as it pertains to communications, despite our different locations and time zones."

As part of this trip, she was also able to meet with key legislative assistants and discuss a few pharmacy-related bills currently under review in both houses. "I met with Grant Kerr, Legislative Director for Congresswoman Norma Torres, and Carl Welliver, Legislative Research Assistant for Senator Barbara Boxer. Both elected officials are co-sponsors of the bills we discussed,” she comments. "Additionally, I had an opportunity to discuss a section of the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act of 2015 that would impact patient access to pharmacy services."

Regarding her future career in pharmacy, she adds, "I am considering residency, but am keeping my options open. This experience allowed me to explore different opportunities in the vast world of pharmacy, in addition to networking and learning from various leaders within the profession.”

"We’re very proud of Eileen and her leadership on a national level,” comments Susan Cornell, Pharm.D., APhA-ASP Faculty Co-Advisor for the CCP chapter. “She has represented both herself and the College so well in moving the profession of pharmacy forward.”
Student Leadership Institute Graduates its Class of 2016

Forty-one students from four Chicago-area colleges of pharmacy recently completed the 2016 Student Leadership Institute. Partially funded by CVS Health, this program is developed and presented on the Midwestern University campus. This year’s participating pharmacy students were from Midwestern University, the University of Illinois at Chicago, Roosevelt University, and Rosalind Franklin University.

The goal of the Institute is to develop tomorrow’s pharmacy leaders through a series of interactive sessions designed to develop various leadership skills. Four on-campus sessions took place on evenings and Saturdays and included topics such as: business etiquette, presentation skills, team-building skills, and emotional intelligence.

A key component of the Institute is to assign student participants to mentors who are leaders and practicing pharmacists in students’ areas of interest. More than 20 mentors in various areas of pharmacy practice volunteered their time to work with the students at their practice sites on an individual basis. Most of the mentors are CCP alumni.

“This is a terrific opportunity for these students to build leadership skills, as well as their network,” says Nancy Fjortoft, Ph.D., Dean and Professor for CCP. “The students who participated this year came in with a variety of past leadership experiences, which ranged from very little to more advanced. They all learned from one another and came away with a new perspective on what successful leadership really entails. We look forward to seeing their success.”

CCP Student Earns Gateway to Research Scholarship

Cameron Cluff, a second-year pharmacy student, recently received a prestigious national research scholarship from the American Foundation for Pharmaceutical Education Gateway to Research Scholarship. His project entitled, "Evaluation of Vancomycin Exposures Associated with Elevations in Novel Urinary Biomarkers of Acute Kidney Injury in Vancomycin-treated Rats" was presented at the annual Kenneth A. Suarez Research Day on the Downers Grove Campus of Midwestern University. This summer, he will help lead a team of fellow students to further develop his research project.

The primary goal of the Gateway to Research Scholarship program is to help pharmacy students gain an understanding of the importance of research and enable them to improve their clinical skills. The scholarship provides a unique opportunity for talented doctorate degree students to participate in a faculty-mentored research project. The Gateway to Research Scholarship also encourages students who have the aptitude and desire to pursue a career in research to continue their education.

The American Foundation for Pharmaceutical Education provides fellowships, scholarships, and grants to help educate the very best and brightest students in the pharmaceutical sciences in preparation for distinguished careers in industry and academia.

Calendar & Contact Us

High School Seniors: Dual Acceptance Program (DAP) and Pre-Pharmacy Advantage (PPA) Program applications due - February 15, 2017

Traditional Applicants: Fees, PCAT scores, and letters of recommendation due to MWU Office of Admissions - March 1, 2017

For any questions relating to your application and/or admission, please call the Midwestern University Office of Admissions at 800/458-6253 or admisSSIL@midwestern.edu.

Graduates from the 2016 Student Leadership Institute.