Students Broaden Their Pharmacy Education Through Summer Internships

Our Chicago College of Pharmacy (CCP) students have summer breaks after their first and second years in the curriculum. Many students take advantage of this time to participate in research opportunities or internships to maximize their real world pharmacy experiences. This helps guide them when choosing classroom and rotation electives later in the curriculum.

Here are a few of the numerous CCP students that participated in summer internship opportunities just last summer, after their PS-I and PS-II years (their current year in school is noted). Here, they talk about their experiences and how those are impacting their future pharmacy career paths and professional growth.

Nabiha Mahmood, PS-III
Cleveland Clinic Foundation – Inpatient Hospital Pharmacy

How did you attain this internship position?
The application process is extremely competitive and requires a personal statement, curriculum vitae (or “CV,” which is similar to a resume) and three letters of recommendation. They look for individuals who demonstrate leadership and are highly interested in preparing for a pharmacy residency. The internship is 12 weeks long and requires a variety of rotations throughout the hospital, similar to a residency.

What did you do in this internship?
I did many things. I participated in a research project, presented the research project, presented disease states and treatments depending on the rotation we were on during that time, and assisted in daily pharmacist activities throughout the various rotations. I enjoyed the ability to go on rotations, similar to fourth-year rotations known as Advanced Pharmacy Practice Experiences (or APPEs) and similar to what a residency will be like. I also worked as a pharmacy technician on weekends.

One of the highlights was that I was given the opportunity to provide warfarin counseling and to be able to lead a follow-up diabetes visit during my ambulatory care rotation. This allowed me to take the lead and gain confidence in my knowledge and ability to communicate with patients while under the supervision of the pharmacist.

How has this experience impacted your pharmacy education?
It prepared me extremely well for my APPE rotations and in my understanding of what to expect with a pharmacy residency. It solidified my interest in pursuing a residency, but it also gave me realistic expectations of what type of residency to consider in order to be able to balance my work with my responsibilities to my family. I feel more confident in my communication skills, and now I know how to begin applying the material from the classroom to a real life situation.

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A Student’s Perspective: The reality … it’s fun!

By Andrea Beall, PS-III Student

Let’s hit the books. As an under-grad, my idea of what pharmacy school would be like tended to revolve around that phrase, a lot of class time and even more study time. How exciting to pick out the perfect antibiotic for the bacteria presented on the exam! However, this perception of mine changed quickly once I was immersed in my first quarter at CCP. In my previous blog, I talked about my experiences on my rotations (the hands-on learning required at different practice sites). This is just one example of how my perception changed. The others are my involvement with organizations on campus and my support framework of friends.

Sure, you need to learn in classes and rotations. But another way to learn about the pharmacy profession is through joining organizations. These organizations allow you to learn more about pharmacy, and most of the time, in a fun way. I am most involved with Illinois Council of Health System Pharmacists (ICHP) and College of Psychiatric and Neurologic Pharmacists (CPNP).

When I was a first-year pharmacy student, I participated in ICHP’s Legislative Day where we took a bus down to the state capitol in Springfield to urge our representatives to vote for such things as decreasing the age at which patients can be immunized by pharmacists. Last year, I volunteered with ICHP at Midwestern University’s Community Health Fair. At the annual health fair, various student organizations educate the Downers Grove community about different disease states, signs and symptoms, and preventative measures. ICHP’s poster focused on cancer.

CPNP’s student chapter at CCP is fairly new. I have gone to listen to speakers we invited to the school. It’s interesting to hear about their careers, backgrounds, and advice.

In addition to the organizations on campus, I have also learned from my job at Osco, a community pharmacy. Since I started pharmacy school, I have worked there between eight and 12 hours per week.

To juggle all this, the support of my understanding classmates have helped me manage my part-time job, school work, and student organizations. Before you even start your first year, you are put into an advisory group, which is a group you will work with throughout your next couple of years. With ample opportunities for group work, developing friendships is easy. I started pharmacy school with my best friend, but it’s nice to have others around to discuss problems with and have support from.

My classroom work and “hitting the books” are very important for surviving pharmacy school. What I’ve learned from my classes has allowed me to converse with colleagues and mentors on a higher level. Ask me now, though, which is more exciting: finding the perfect antibiotic for the bacteria on the exam, or talking with my state representatives to advance my future career? Ask me if picking out the perfect antibiotic on a test is better than late-night study groups with my friends coming up with acronyms for remembering the gram positive and gram negative bacteria.

Looking to the future, I hope to continue my involvement with national organizations, so that I may have an effect on my profession. I also hope to maintain the many friendships I’ve built, in case I need another pharmacist’s opinion, or just need a refresher on the funny acronym for remembering gram positive bacteria.

Midwestern University Community Health Fair
Second-year pharmacy students Carrie Park and Michelle Martinez counsel patients about their blood glucose screening results at the annual Community Health Fair. Spearheaded by the CCP Student Council, this event gathers together students from all Midwestern University programs to offer free health screenings and flu shots to the community, as well as answer patients’ questions on various health topics.
Alina Sirotinskiy, PS-III
Dominick’s Patient Care
Summer Internship

What was the application process like?
I found out about the internship opportunity at the annual CCP CAREERxPO, and then I contacted the person in charge of the internship myself. Out of all the applicants they receive, 30 applicants are invited for an interview, and of those 30 interviewed, 15 are offered an internship position.

What opportunities were you given during your internship?
I took part in the national test pilot program of the Niox Mino manufactured by Aerocrine, and I presented our findings to corporate staff from both Aerocrine and Dominick’s. I was trained on the proper administration technique of glucose screenings, cholesterol screenings, and immunizations. I administered glucose and cholesterol screenings. And I was responsible for doing two presentations (one individual and one group).

What did you enjoy most about your opportunity?
I was deeply exposed to corporate pharmacy and community pharmacy within a matter of eight short weeks. This was not an internship where I simply filled prescriptions. I was able to meet and work closely with numerous members of corporate Dominick’s, as well as meet prominent leaders in the pharmaceutical industry. We spent almost no time discussing hypothetical situations, rather everything was hands on. This internship was truly a one-of-a-kind experience, and I am grateful to have taken part.

Sazan Sylejmani, PS-III
Jewel/Osco (Albertson’s)
Summer Internship

How did you come across this internship opportunity?
I have been working with this company for about three years and then decided to apply for this internship. Each week, I spent four days at the community pharmacy, and one day at the corporate office.

How did this experience differ from your rotation experiences?
The difference was like night and day from my rotations experiences. During the internship, I was an actual employee and was able to work on tasks other than fill prescriptions. I enjoyed the pace of the internship with projects and reading. Through the projects assigned to the interns, there were so many opportunities to learn so much more about retail pharmacy.

Did this experience help solidify the area of pharmacy you’d like to pursue once you graduate?
This experience really opened my eyes to pharmacy operations, how corporate delegates tasks, and how retail pharmacies function. I was able to work 40 hours a week, see the entire process of a prescription, and learn about resolving certain issues that arise with prescriptions. This helped solidify my trust in retail pharmacy, which is the right career path for me. I also understand my opportunities to move up in the company. And for my fourth-year rotations, I do not need to do the required retail corporate rotation since I had this internship. This gives me the opportunity to experience another type of elective rotation, and broaden my experience even more.

Jillian Beneventi, PS-II
Jewel/Osco (Albertson’s)
Summer Internship

It looks like your internship is similar to Sazan’s (above). What can you tell us about your application process experience?
I interviewed with Jewel-Osco representatives when they came to campus in the beginning of December. During the interview, I demonstrated my active involvement in community pharmacy, in extracurricular activities on campus, as well as my academic achievements. Then I completed the online essay-question application.

What did you enjoy most about your opportunity?
I really enjoyed the opportunity to shadow Jewel-Osco pharmacists in their various roles, including pharmacy manager, staff pharmacist, clinical specialist, and district manager. This internship exposed me to the many outlets that I can pursue post-graduation. This experience differed from my community rotation experience in that the workbook I was given was more therapeutic-based, thus giving me a nice introduction to the various disease states and drugs prior to my PS-II therapeutics courses. Furthermore, I was introduced to more of the clinical side of community pharmacy; I was able to actively promote such services, and I learned how to perform many of them.

What surprised you?
The plethora of knowledge and experience I gained over the course of only eight weeks really surprised me. I feel more confident in my role as a student pharmacist! This experience helped solidify my aspirations to pursue community pharmacy post-graduation, and it exposed me to the many areas one can pursue in this field. It also confirmed the sense of fulfillment I enjoy in the provider-patient relationship developed in the community pharmacy setting. I’ve learned to never pass up any opportunity. You never know where it will lead or how it will influence you.

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Strong CCP Student Representation at ASHP

Each year in early December, many CCP faculty and students attend the annual American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP) Clinical Midyear Meeting to network with fellow professionals, share research and best practices, and learn of the latest advances in clinical pharmaceutical care. This year, a number of CCP student research posters were accepted for display, and they are listed below. (CCP students are noted in bold; CCP faculty, residents and fellow are noted in italics.)

Chiu, Brandon; Wang, Wesley; Lee, Benjamin; Li, Tze; Arif, Sally; Wang, Sheila. "Impact of a pharmacy student run health awareness program in an underserved Chinese American community."

Dobrzyn, Rachel; Arif, Sally; Huynh, Nina; Snyder, Scott. "Evaluation of the safety and efficacy of rivaroxaban and dabigatran at a large tertiary teaching institution."

Eischen, Edward; Bierman, Jacob; Scheetz, Marc; Esterly, John; Rhodes, Nathaniel J. "Implementation of a daptomycin dose rounding protocol: a cost savings initiative."

Ghalyoun, Amina; Wang, Ray; Gilchrist, Annette. "Development of a health and wellness promoters program for secondary schools facilitated by PharmD students."

Harrison, Leia; Phillips, Jennifer; Stoyanova, Zheni; Bachenheimer, Bonnie. "Analysis of pharmacist use of and comfort level with drug information resources."

Heraty, Ryan; Zomas, Athanasios; Trifilo, Steven; Mehta, Jayesh. "Amphotericin B nasal spray administration appears effective in preventing invasive fungal infection in patients receiving hematopoietic stem cell transplants."

Lam, Connie; Budris, William. "Evaluation of risk factors for bleeding present in hospital admitted patients using hetastarch."

Lee, Benjamin; Rhodes, Nathaniel J.; Nevekral, Sonia; Wang, Sheila; Scheetz, Marc. "Oxacillin versus cefazolin for treatment of Methicillin susceptible Staphylococcus aureus bloodstream infections."

Li, Tze; Lee, Benjamin; Leung, Elizabeth. "Evaluation of Susceptibility and Treatment of Gram-Negative Bloodstream Infections in Tertiary-care Hospital."

Liu, Xiaojun; Heraty, Ryan; Richardson, Chad; Rhodes, Nathaniel J.; Scheetz, Marc. "Comparison of cefepime minimum inhibition concentration reporting using vitek 2 and agar dilution in extended spectrum beta lactamase producing Escherichia coli isolates."

Lopez, Jenna; Khan, Aamina; Pham, Cecilia; Rhodes, Nathaniel J.; Scheetz, Marc. "Evaluation of extended infusion piperacillin-tazobactam protocol using smart pump technology."

Moy, Jennifer; Borchart, Jill; dela Pena, Lea; D’Souza, Jennifer. "Quality of care in secondary fraction prevention."

Ong, Jeannie; Pham, Cecilia; Regalado, Jane. "Survey of obstacles facing investigational drug services."

Park, Gabriel; Pichlik, Jennifer; Gilchrist, Annette; Joshi, Medha. "Efficacious intracellular delivery of bortezomib encapsulated in liposomes: a comparison between cationic and ceramide liposomes."

Skoglund, Erik; McLaughlin, Milena; Rhodes, Nathaniel J.; Scheetz, Marc. "Patient mortality in Gram-negative blood stream infections with elevated carbapenem MICs that were treated with a carbapenem."

Toy, Carolyn; Lopez, Jenna; Lizza, Bryan; Rhodes, Nathaniel J.; Scheetz, Marc. "Evaluation of obesity on outcomes from gram-negative bacteremia."

Valela, Cortney; Phillips, Jennifer; Aruru, Meghana. "Labeling Accuracy of Weight Loss Dietary Supplements."

Veloso, Randolph; Phillips, Jennifer; O’Donnell, Paul; Chapman, Robert; Mirk, Sean; Schmidt, Justin; Wieczorkiewicz, Jeffrey. "A survey of faculty needs, perceptions, and usage patterns in a mandatory laptop curriculum."

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Veeral Vyas, PS-III
Target Pharmacy Internship

What did you enjoy most about your opportunity?
I really enjoyed the chance to be part of a team that was bigger than just the pharmacy team. At Target, all of the employees are happy to provide the best possible shopping experience for each guest and patient. I also enjoyed the freedom to develop my internship in whatever way I wanted. Obviously there were basic things I had to learn. But from there, I had as little or as much freedom as I wanted to make the most of my experience: from counseling patients, networking with store leadership, to leading a team.

Did you encounter any challenges?
I thought getting everyone’s buy-in would be easy. But there was one pharmacy technician who really made me work to figure out how to get her buy-in. She has been a technician for longer than I’ve been alive! But by the end of the internship experience, she said in all her years, she’s never met anyone that she would want to work for more than me!

Anything else you’d like to add that would be of interest?
The internship experience is based on what you put into it. Personally, I was always intrigued by the way a Target store ran. Through this internship, I had the opportunity to run a Target store and act as a leader on duty numerous times. Furthermore, the experience allowed me to network with interns from all over the Midwest who were not only in pharmacy, but other areas of the store too. I realized that it was not just about making money or getting a promotion or reaching numbers. Essentially I learned that the true measure of my own success was how many people’s lives were touched because I was there.

Calendar

Dual Acceptance Program applications due - February 15, 2014
Supplemental applications and fees, PCAT scores and Letters of Recommendations due to MWU Office of Admissions - March 1, 2014

Contact Us
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.