

VIEWPOINTS

Joint College of Pharmacy-Community Pharmacy Residencies

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Colleges of pharmacy, chain pharmacies, independent practitioners and national and state pharmacist organizations are all committed to identifying opportunities for pharmacists to provide new patient-focused services. One such mechanism for doing so is the community pharmacy residency.

The American Pharmacists Association defines a residency in pharmacy practice with an emphasis in community care as, “an organized, directed, post-graduate training program that centers on development of knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to pursue pharmaceutical care for patients in the community setting.”¹

West Virginia University School of Pharmacy and Rite Aid Corporation have jointly implemented a community pharmacy residency to meet the needs of patients for clinical programs and pharmaceutical care services in a small rural city of 5000 residents, 25 miles from campus. This community practice residency, which was initiated in July 2001, allows the resident, under the mentorship of a residency director and staff pharmacists, to construct, develop and implement pharmaceutical care programs with emphasis on providing disease state management and prevention.

In providing these programs and services through a residency, we believe that both the community pharmacy and the College of Pharmacy benefit. The community pharmacy benefits from the new opportunities for staff pharmacists to provide patient-focused care, which increases their visibility to the consumer. This increased visibility helps to enhance the public’s awareness of community pharmacy practice. In addition, along with the recognition of a pharmacist’s knowledge and ability, by focusing on the patient, the residency can increase communication and interaction with physicians and other health-care providers in the community. In this time of critical shortages of pharmacists, recruitment can be a further advantage of a viable and visible community residency program. Finally, the increased potential for

community-based research in pharmaceutical care offers the opportunity for increased linkages with colleges of pharmacy.

Colleges of pharmacy benefit by gaining clerkship sites that serve as role models for contemporary pharmacy practice. In addition, the Rite Aid Corporation and West Virginia University created a shared faculty position in which the individual recruited (who had previously completed a community pharmacy residency) not only helped to increase communication with practitioners and patients in the community, but also developed and implemented innovative practices that positively impacted the community. This individual also serves as the Residency Director and provides the mentorship for the resident to focus on pharmaceutical care activities.

Finally, West Virginia University School of Pharmacy utilizes a faculty colleague with expertise in experimental design and research methodology as the Residency Research Director. This person helps identify research opportunities and, along with the Residency Director, works with the resident to complete a project suitable for presentation and publication. Both the School of Pharmacy and Rite Aid, as well as the community, gain from this patient-focused research. The nature and scope of the research can serve a unique function in terms of both student recruitment and interdisciplinary faculty collaborations.

In August 2003, the West Virginia University – Rite Aid Community Pharmacy Residency was accredited jointly by the American Pharmacists Association and the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists. This rigorous standard is designed to ensure consistent quality in community residency programs and serves to distinguish the many residencies that are available. It is a goal that all residencies should strive for and affords recognition to both the College and community pharmacy for their commitment to pharmaceutical care.

The initiation of a community pharmacy residency requires considerable planning. Goals and objectives must be clearly stated and guidelines implemented. Applicant qualifications and eligibility must be well defined. In our case, locating the specific pharmacy housing the residency was critical to its success.

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Considerable time was spent interviewing pharmacy staff members at various locations prior to the selection of the most appropriate site.

The past 5 years have seen a significant increase in the number of community pharmacy residency programs and sites. In 1999, there were 23 programs at 35 sites. By 2004, these have increased to 64 programs with more than 120 sites. [Personal communication. A. Burns. American Pharmacists Association. September 3, 2004] This increase represents the recognition by colleges and community pharmacies that building on the knowledge acquired in the classroom and during experiential education will enhance professional competence in a highly competitive health care environment.

In addition, the graduates of community pharmacy residencies can help to provide the next generation of clinical practice academicians who have teaching experience as well as an appreciation for the value a community pharmacist brings to their patients. Recognizing the

need to attract and develop this cadre of individuals, we encourage colleges of pharmacy to reach out to community pharmacies and identify potential residency sites.

In closing, it is our feeling that community pharmacy residencies can make a tremendous impact on the future of our profession. The interaction between academia and community pharmacy practice will enhance both of our efforts to achieve a pharmaceutical care model for patients. We recognize that developing and initiating a community pharmacy residency requires a considerable expenditure of time and resources. Yet, in our opinion, the rewards gained by the resident, the community pharmacy and the patients it serves, and the college of pharmacy are well worth that effort.

REFERENCES

1. American Pharmacists Association and American Society of Health-Systems Pharmacists. Accreditation Standards and Learning Objectives for Residency Training in Pharmacy Practice (with emphasis in community care) – Joint Publication. June 1999.