



School of Pharmacy Collaborates with Hartford Hospital to Expand Student Exchange Program

By: Kate Mather

In the spring of 2008, Hartford Hospital played host to two French pharmacy students from the Universite de Rennes. UConn School of Pharmacy students have been completing rotations at Hartford Hospital for over thirty years, but this was the first year that the hospital collaborated with Dr. Phil Hritcko the UConn pharmacy student exchange program. In years past, the students completed their rotations at Yale-New Haven Hospital, but with the help of Pharmacy Clinical Manager Bob Quercia and Director of Pharmacy Services Mike Rubino, Hartford Hospital is now warmly welcoming the international exchange students.

Alumnus Bob Quercia has worked at Hartford Hospital since the 1970s and has been directly involved in working with students since 1978, when he began setting up and scheduling student rotations. This year proved to be somewhat of a challenge, however, when Mr. Quercia realized that this rotation would not be like the others. Not only were students Anais Lerhun and Elodie Radier completing a three month rotation rather than the standard one month, but they would also need to be provided with housing and a system of transportation when plans called for them to travel from Hartford to the Storrs campus.



Pictured from left to right are Bob Quercia, Anai Lehun, Elodie Radier, and Mike Rubino at Hartford Hospital.

To accommodate the students' lengthy stay, a system of one-week rotations was designed. Anais and Elodie completed several mini-rotations concerned with infectious disease, medicinal surgery, drug info, pain management, critical care, geriatrics, and psychiatry, among others. When asked to describe a normal day, Elodie replies, "There is no normal day. Everyday is different. That's what makes it interesting." Mr. Quercia explains that the faculty and staff at the hospital have been extremely accommodating and that it truly is a win-win situation for both the students and the staff. Having international students here "creates a new dimension," he states, "It challenges the staff, and gets them to think outside of the box."

Continues on Page 3



A Message from the Director

As director of the UConn School of Pharmacy Office of Experiential Education, I want to share my sincere appreciation for all of your hard work and dedication to our UConn pharmacy students. We would be unable to provide our pharmacy students with good quality experiences without your participation in our experiential programs.

There are many changes facing pharmacy education in recent years, especially in the area of experiential education. Our accrediting body, the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE), recently released a new set of accreditation standards for all schools and colleges of pharmacy throughout the country. These new accreditation standards are often referred to as "Standards 2007." Standards 2007 emphasize the importance of clinical experiences in the education of pharmacy students. Introductory and advanced pharmacy practice experiences (IPPEs and APPEs, also known as "rotations") are now critical elements in the education and training of our pharmacy students. The goal of these experiences is to assist students to integrate and apply knowledge that they learned from the classroom "didactic setting" and to develop critical thinking skills while being active learners. The ultimate goal of these experiences is

Continues on Page 2

By: Sarah Kearns

Preceptors play an important part in helping the students develop as a pharmacist at designated sites. The work of the School of Pharmacy's Experiential Education Advisory Board helps to ensure that both preceptor and student are getting the best possible experience. The Experiential Education Advisory Board "helps the UConn School of Pharmacy fulfill its mission as it relates to experiential education. It provides advice and counsel to the dean and director of the Office of Experiential Education in achieving their vision to provide educationally sound experience opportunities in all areas of pharmacy practice. On top of that, the board members serve as advocates for School of Pharmacy with various practitioner groups in Connecticut and nationally."

The board is comprised of a variety of different members from across the state that represent different areas of pharmaceutical study. Two former members are Darlene Able, who represented Able Care Pharmacy, and Michael Schlesselman, who is affiliated with Lawrence and Memorial Hospital. Able's provided a perspective from an independently owned pharmacy. Able explained that she originally became involved with the board because it allowed her to meet pharmacists with whom she would not normally be in contact. On top of that, the board also gave her a deeper understanding of the profession and the abilities of pharmacists. She said that what she learned by being a member helped her to shape her own practice setting as well as kept her up to date and informed. Able now serves on the School of Pharmacy Advisory Board. Schlesselman's position on the board was as a voice for all hospital pharmacy precepting sites. He believes that it is important to give back to the profession and that through this payback the

profession is able to grow. He is aware that the pharmacy students grow from learning and in turn the profession grows due to the students' development. Schlesselman stated, "I want to make sure that the needs of hospital pharmacy are met when students go on rotation."

Both Able and Schlesselman understand that if they want quality pharmacy students to go into practice and become colleagues, it is their duty to help maximize that learning experience. They know that one cannot learn to be a pharmacist just through taking classes, because their profession calls for real world experience to succeed and to help serve the patients.

The Board itself varies in size from as few as seven to no more than fifteen members. The members themselves represent a diverse variety of pharmacists and those who show a strong interest in the advancement of pharmacy education at the professional level. Along with being a diverse group, members must agree to the mission statement of the board and will serve a term that runs from July 1st to June 30th of each succeeding year. They can serve no more than two consecutive years.

The Board meets two times a year, once in the fall, usually September and then again in the spring, usually April to discuss matters at hand. The meetings are a good way to get the perspective of all different types and variations of pharmacy. By bringing all of these different aspects together, it allows for the members to be brought up to date and keep people informed with what is happening in the pharmacy community. Along with keeping all members informed of recent and current happenings, it provides a way for people to share their opinion as well as give feedback about issues at hand. ■

to promote a culture of lifetime learning for our students.

To meet these new standards, our Office of Experiential Education (OEE) has been implementing expanded and more rigorous IPPEs, especially in the areas of community pharmacy, institutional pharmacy and service learning. UConn pharmacy students are now required, as early as their first professional year (PI), to dedicate at least 300 hours throughout their IPPEs in these required areas before they enter their P4 year. I would like to especially thank all of our community and institutional partners in supporting these new and expanded initiatives with our IPPE program. Your willingness to participate in these new expanded IPPEs has helped us in meeting the new Standards 2007 requirements.

Another component of the new Standards 2007 requires all schools and colleges of pharmacy to ensure that preceptors are adequately trained "prior to assuming responsibilities" and to provide "ongoing training and development" for preceptors. Since we have hundreds of preceptors located not only through the State of Connecticut but throughout the country this presented a challenge to our OEE. We do offer live CE preceptor development programming but not all of our preceptors are able to attend these events. We, therefore, have recently partnered with the "Pharmacist's Letter Preceptor Training & Resources Network" to provide live webinar and online preceptor CE programming for free to all of our UConn preceptors. This will allow our preceptors to receive FREE CE programming and preceptor training and development at their convenience. To learn more and to register for the Pharmacist's Letter Preceptor Training & Resources Network, please use the directions on page 7:

Continues on Page 7



University of
Connecticut

Contributors:

Elizabeth Anderson, Laura Blackburn, Daniel Buttrey, Philip Hritcko, Sarah Kearns, Karen Logan, Kate Mather, and Lauren Silber

Focus on Faculty

By: Sarah Kearns

The Office of Experiential Education oversees the Professional Experience Program including both early and advanced pharmacy practice experiences. As such, this office is always looking to add to the growing list of experiential educational sites, in an effort to ensure that UConn students have as wide a range of practice experiences to choose from as possible.

One of the sites available to P4 students is located at the Community Health Center in Meriden, Connecticut. The Community Health Center rotation is precepted by faculty member Dr. Diana Sobieraj. Dr. Sobieraj earned her Pharm.D. degree at the University of Rhode Island, followed by a pharmacy residency with a focus in ambulatory care at Hartford Hospital.

Dr. Sobieraj has been with the Community Health Center since August 2007 and says that the Health Center is different than other preceptor sites due to the fact that it is a family practice, including five family practitioners and one pediatrician. Also on staff at the Health Center are nurses, medical assistants, APRN residents, and two students each from the University of Connecticut Schools of Pharmacy and Medicine.

The Health Center is a non-profit health facility that provides accessible, high quality health care to those who would normally not be able to receive it. In addition to offering various medical options, the Health Center includes a school-based medicine program that provides on-site medical services to schools in the surrounding area.



[Pictured Above] Students on rotation at the Community Health Center in Meriden present their research projects.

This Health Center offers the electronic medical records service, which allows for all medical records to be kept and accessed by the touch of a button, instead of having to thumb through files. The language line, which is located in every room of the hospital, allows the doctor to be connected to an interpreter for 80 languages. In addition to electronic medical records and the language line, the Health Center also offers the Walgreen's 340b Drug Program that provides medications to the patients at a greatly reduced price because the health center qualifies for such a program.

The Meriden Community Health Center not only offers these great services to its patients, but it offers many opportunities for the students as well. The site affords students the opportunity to participate in interview counseling. This entails educating the patients on different diseases as well as offering them information on different medicines and the techniques used to take these medicines. The addition of the Meriden Community Health Center gives students first hand experience and the opportunity to work with and be involved with a unique population of patients and cases that would not normally be seen elsewhere. ■

Exchange Program

Continued From Page 1

Mr. Quercia, Mr. Rubino, and the staff have also encouraged the students to explore what is outside the hospital, and Anais and Elodie have done so more than willingly. Their dormitories, which are part of nursing student housing across the street, have allowed them to explore the downtown Hartford area. They are competent users of the bus system and have taken advantage of their close proximity to the Hartford train station. In their free time they visited Niagara Falls, Cape Cod, Boston, New York City, and Washington, DC. Mr. Quercia and Mr. Rubino were concerned whether the students would adapt, but this is no longer a worry. "We have adapted well, it was easy to get used to life here. People are very nice and everyone wants to help," states Anais. Elodie adds, "we have enjoyed being here. There is always someone to explain things and it has exceeded our expectations."

The pharmacy clinical manager and the director of pharmacy services have done everything they can to make the rotation not only an educational learning experience, but also a cultural learning experience. They have given Elodie and Anais a true sense of pharmacy in America, a system of care that is very much involved with the patient and his needs, a system much different than the one in France. The program was extraordinarily successful, as Elodie remarks, "if I had the opportunity, I would definitely come back to work in America," a sure sign that Mr. Quercia, Mr. Rubino, and Hartford Hospital created a program that exceeded not only their own expectations, but those of the students. Making learning a wonderful experience is what precepting is all about, and Bob Quercia and Mike Rubino, along with everyone at Hartford Hospital have gone the extra mile for all pharmacy students. ■

Save the Date

The Pharmacy Appreciation Dinner will take place on Thursday, October 29, 2009. Visit our website for more information and registration materials.

Did You Know...

The experiential program comprises 30% of the curriculum for the Doctor of Pharmacy Professional Program?

Moving Forward in Pharmaceutical Practice: The School of Pharmacy works with Fort Hill Pharmacy in Expanding the Duties of Pharmacists

By: Lauren Silber

Walking into Fort Hill Pharmacy in Groton, Connecticut, your eyes dart from the walls of canes, walkers, and wheelchairs, to the shelves filled with over-the-counter remedies common in bathrooms and hallway closets. At the back of the store, there is a rack of magazines and New York Times Best Sellers along with numerous types of gum and candy. Behind the counter, pharmacists are busily filling prescriptions and counseling patients. To your right is Jeff Messina, owner and manager of Fort Hill Pharmacy, helping a patient find the most suitable over-the-counter drug for his ailment.

Fort Hill Pharmacy has been in Jeff's family since his father opened the doors in 1960. After receiving his degree in 1983 from the University of Connecticut's School of Pharmacy, Messina worked to "set [Fort Hill Pharmacy] apart" while remaining a pharmacy with a "strong service orientation". When the State of Connecticut decreed that pharmacists could become trained to immunize in 2006, Messina worked to acquire the certification. He was contacted by UConn's School of Pharmacy director of the Office Assessment and Accreditation, Dr. Lauren Schlesselman, to be involved in a training program hosted by the School of Pharmacy.

Messina arrived at the School of Pharmacy with co-worker Jen Stone, amazed to see the physical changes his alma mater had undergone. Entering the building, the beautifully lit glass atrium drew his eyes in every direction. The six-story building, located in the University Science Quadrangle, is home to research laboratories in the north wing and offices, meeting rooms, classrooms, and the pharmacy library in the south wing. The state of the art facilities matched the level of the School of Pharmacy faculty who upon notification of the new allowance for pharmacists, made adjustments to their own training. The School of Pharmacy had ten faculty members trained to

administer vaccinations as well as seven faculty members trained to train other pharmacists to administer vaccinations. These trained faculty members, with the direction of Dr. Schlesselman, led the training that Messina, Stone, and ten other Connecticut pharmacists underwent. Following the immunization training program designated by the state, Dr. Schlesselman taught the pharmacists about immunization practices, ending with the practice of administering the shot themselves. Having acquired the appropriate training, the pharmacists left the program with the ability to make a change in their pharmaceutical practices.

Messina wasted no time after he received his training. By May of 2007, he began preparing his pharmacy for their first immunizations for the fall of that year. Having completed two seasons of influenza vaccinations, Messina surpassed the difficulties of setting up billing through Medicare and now provides the influenza vaccine for a large part of the Groton community. Fort Hill Pharmacy provides the influenza vaccine during specific weeks of the fall, usually on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays between 1 and 5 pm. They encourage walk-ins and word of mouth is their best source of advertisement. Messina explains, "Treating the flu vaccination as a walk-in service makes the process much more convenient and accessible for the patient. As opposed to the day where we invited a third party for a flu vaccination clinic, our patients are able to avoid long lines of people and third party errors. It becomes an overall better experience for everyone."

Fort Hill Pharmacy remains devoted to patient care and Jeff Messina knows the majority of his clients by their first names. This environment is important for the School of Pharmacy which is why Fort Hill Pharmacy is an appropriate location for rotations. With the adoption of the new curriculum, The School of Pharmacy now trains P3s in their spring semester to receive their APhA certification for immunization



Jeff Messina at Fort Hill Pharmacy in Groton, CT provides a "strong service orientation."

practices. Messina ensures that the students at Fort Hill pharmacy expand upon this certification, immunizing patients in his pharmacy.

Jeff Messina's work has not ended with new implementation of flu vaccination practices. He has testified on a bill to expand Connecticut Pharmacist immunization practices to include more vaccines. Messina feels this is the "direction pharmacy needs to go." Messina explains, "So much of what [pharmacists] do is controlled legislatively. Not only in regards to what we can practice but also how we are reimbursed. Our economic and professional future is controlled and if we do not embrace new roles, our chances to survive are mitigated."

He insists that "in other countries, pharmacy has a much broader scope". Messina's work at Fort Hill pharmacy is reminding his colleagues of the importance of maintaining a community based pharmacy while remaining involved with pharmaceutical issues at the national level. Dr. Schlesselman agrees, explaining, "with the state recognizing the ability and knowledge of the pharmacist, the field of pharmacy is receiving recognition. Furthermore, this program brings the healthcare professional community together, reminding us that we are all working towards the same goal. The collaboration amongst professionals in the field will increase the amount of patients that can be helped."

The work of professionals such as Dr. Lauren Schlesselman at the University of Connecticut and Jeff Messina at Fort Hill Pharmacy show students the importance of professional goals and courage. ■

Online Portfolio Platform to Revolutionize Pharmacy Communications

By: Laura Blackburn

The pharmacy industry is fast-paced, constantly changing, and requires increased pharmacist accountability and transparency to maintain a positive and beneficial client relationship. In order to keep the integrity of both the educational and professional environments, the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE) requires pharmacy students to maintain and update a portfolio that tracks their development throughout their pharmacy school experience. Other schools have utilized a paper portfolio format, which is not only difficult to maintain and track but is not secure in an industry that values privacy. The School of Pharmacy, however, is now utilizing a new secure web-based platform, known as RxPortfolios, for creating a pharmacy portfolio in which students, faculty, and preceptors can maintain their portfolios.

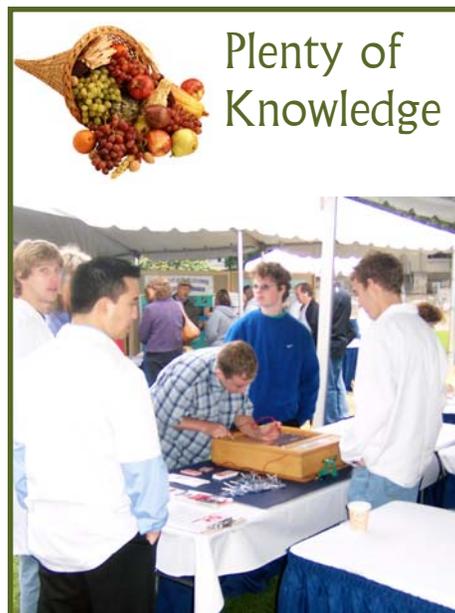
Currently, 26 schools of pharmacy are officially affiliated with the site and over 80 schools have students or faculty with active portfolios. RxPortfolios provides a user-friendly design and the ability to publish a general biography, career objectives, dissertations, classes taken to fulfill CE requirements, grants and research projects, licenses, awards and other important information relevant to the upholding and advancement of pharmacy standards. The site is designed with both pharmacists and pharmacy education in mind and grows with the user, potentially facilitating a lifelong learning experience.

Unlike social networking sites with similar features, RxPortfolio was developed for professional purposes only. The system's format is specifically designed for pharmacy students, pharmacists, and pharmacy faculty. The user can provide access to view their profile to colleagues, fellow students, or a prospective employer, while maintaining the ability to limit what information is available for viewing. By limiting access to information the professional integrity of the site can be maintained.

One of the most exciting features of RxPortfolios is the ability to upload and store important documents, including licenses and records, in a safe and secure manner. Students, faculty and pharmacists will no longer need to worry about the security of their documents in a file folder—the online platform ensures that critical documents will be stored for as long as the user has a profile. This system allows the user to maintain an organized portfolio for free while in school and for a nominal fee after graduation. The system is also provided free of charge to all faculty and preceptors at the school.

The versatility and security of maintaining a pharmacy portfolio through RxPortfolios is previously unparalleled. This platform gives the user the ability to connect and communicate with other professionals, automatically generates a resume or CV, and allows students and faculty to find their own niche within the industry. Students will now be able to easily and more effectively track their own professional development and align their learning with industry standards while simultaneously reaching out to other members of the community.

Within the School of Pharmacy, RxPortfolios will be used in conjunction with the RxOutcome system to develop a better picture of each student's professional development. RxOutcome, another web-based secure system, allows for documentation of achievement of professional program competencies. Students, faculty, preceptors, and administrators will longitudinally evaluate student achievement of each competency, utilizing rubrics, personal comments, and attached artifacts. The combination of RxPortfolios and RxOutcome will provide a complete picture of student achievement and professional development. Along with provided required documentation to ACPE, the data provided will allow the school to identify students in need of assistance and identify areas for curricular development. ■



As part of their community outreach activities, pharmacy students manned a booth at the University of Connecticut's Cornucopia Festival held each fall. Guests compared an actual medication with a piece of candy to see if they could tell the two apart.

Save the Date

The Henry A. Palmer CE Finale will take place in the Lewis B. Rome Commons Ballroom on Friday, December 18, 2009.



[Pictured Above] The New England Regional Departments of Experiential Education, better known as the NERDEES, meets periodically to address issues of common concern. UConn's Mary Ann Phanuef is secretary of the group.

School of Pharmacy Students Complete Two-Month Rotation at the University of Barcelona

By: Kate Mather

During the fall 2007 semester, two UConn pharmacy students completed a two-month rotation at the University of Barcelona in Spain. This was the first time UConn pharmacy students were able to travel abroad to study the field and the experience was a rewarding one for students Anthony Faustini and Charles Struzynski.

In each of the two previous years, the UConn School of Pharmacy has played host to students from France, but never before had there been a program where pharmacy students might be able to leave the Storrs campus for study in another country. The interest for Anthony and Charles to study abroad developed only after having talked with a student in one of their labs that was from Barcelona. After toying with the idea of completing a rotation in Spain, they presented their idea and expressed their interest to one of their professors. After ironing out the details with administration from the University of Barcelona and receiving permission from UConn, their rotation was set.

The two months spent in Spain were divided into two, elective, non-patient care rotations (or International Pharmacy Practice I and II rotations, as stated on their transcripts) that dealt mainly with industrial and research based aspects of professional pharmacy. This particular field of pharmacy is considered more lucrative by pharmacists in Spain and as such, the typical clinically-based practice that is offered by schools in the United States is often bypassed. During their rotations, the two worked in a small-scale manufacturing lab where they produced various pharmaceutical dosage forms, performed quality reassurance, and reformulated products to meet specific pharmaceutical guidelines. The online blog that Chuck kept throughout their time in Spain mentions, in detail, several of the tasks they completed, including pill punching, solubility testing, and preparing reference samples for drug quality tests.



While on rotation in Barcelona last November, Teegan French [left] and René Larouche [right] had a surprise visit from Dr. José Manautou who treated them to a non-traditional Thanksgiving dinner.

Their rotation was not all work and no play, however. “The University of Barcelona was very receptive to our needs as foreign students. They wanted us to learn mostly of the culture,” wrote student Anthony Faustini. “This equated to many days spent exploring Barcelona and the history surrounding the city.” On their days and evenings off, the pair visited such sites as Barcelona’s own Arc de Triomf, Parc de la Ciutadella, and Montserrat, a mountainside monastery 60 minutes outside Barcelona. In all, the experience provided educational depth as well as cultural depth. The two learned not only about the unique aspects of industrial and research based pharmaceuticals but also of the culture and the people of Barcelona. When asked if he would consider continuing his career in Spain, Anthony replied: “If it were possible to go to Spain to continue my career, I would. As of yet I have not found a way to do that.” After graduation, Anthony went on to attend the UConn School of Medicine while Chuck was still busily sorting through post-graduation job offers and spending time with his fiancé, to whom he proposed while in Barcelona.

After the success of the first Barcelona experience, René Larouche and Teegan French undertook this rotation in the fall of 2008 with equal success. While on rotation, both Chuck and René blogged about their experiences so faculty, students, and friends could keep up with their day-to-day happenings. Although the School of Pharmacy does not accept any responsibility for the content of these blogs, you are free to visit them at your own risk. René and Teegan even have a video on their site.

To read excerpts from Chuck’s blog, visit www.dirtywaterbrewery.com/spain.

To read excerpts from René’s blog, visit <http://barcelonarotation.blogspot.com>. ■

Did You Know...

In the spring of 2009, Andy Zhang and Sinsook “Ellen” Lee were on rotation at Peking University’s Third Hospital in Beijing, China?

Pharmacists in the Emergency Department

By: Sarah Kearns

Today's world moves at an extremely fast pace, and pharmacists need to keep up with the changes both in and out of hospitals, pharmacies, and the classroom. One relatively new way of practicing pharmacy is the placement of pharmacists in the Emergency Department at hospitals. UConn has two affiliates, Shawn Roggie and Erin Taylor, who are involved with a relatively new program at Baystate Medical Center in Springfield, Massachusetts.

Erin Taylor is the clinical coordinator at the Baystate Medical Center. She believes that the willingness of the pharmacists and the department to work together has made the new placements and programs effective. She admits that at first it was a bit of a struggle for both parties, because neither one knew what to do with the other and what to expect. Now both believe that adding pharmacists to the Emergency Department, provides a reduced margin of error. Instead of having to call to ask a question about a drug, and then waiting minutes or perhaps hours for a response, there is a pharmacist right there ready to answer questions and carry out a specific tasks.

Shawn Roggie is one of those who are on call and ready to answer questions and deal with patients. His specific role is

to provide for the pharmaceutical needs of the patients and staff. He provides timely drug information to the attending physicians, medical residents, and nurses; provides discharge counseling to patients with unique drug needs; and consults on cases with patients who are the most ill as well as carrying out some administrative work. Due to the fact that Shawn works in such close proximity to the staff in the Emergency Department, the staff has developed a level of confidence in him and his abilities to provide his services and accurate information in a timely fashion. Shawn also is an adjunct faculty member at the UConn School of Pharmacy and the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy, so he takes students on clinical rotations in their last year of pharmacy school. Along with educating students in their final rotations, he also finds the time to teach a PGY-I ED residency elective course for pharmacists at the hospital.

The recent placement of pharmacists in the Emergency Department has had a positive effect in the hospital as well as the lives of others. Erin and Shawn were both aware that their knowledge and presence was needed in the Emergency Department. They saw that there was an acute need for someone to work in the fast-paced environment as well as to attend to the needs of the patients. ■

Instructions for registering for Pharmacist Letters Preceptor Training & Resource Network:

1. Click this link or copy/paste the exact URL into your browser:
www.pharmacistsletter.com/?referer=connecticut/ptrn
2. Click "I'm new to Pharmacist's Letter - sign me up for Preceptor CE and Resources!"
3. Enter your information in the form provided and click "Continue"
4. Verify your information and click to confirm your status as a UConn preceptor

In addition, the University of Connecticut School of Pharmacy Office of Pharmacy Professional Development is pleased to introduce Preceptor Online Education. These programs have been developed to enhance your precepting experience and provide you with continuing education credits. Please note that these activities are FREE to all UConn preceptors. Please visit our CE website at:

www.pharmacyce.uconn.edu

Click on the Preceptor tab in the banner at the top of the page.

October is American Pharmacists Month! It is a perfect month to recognize all of our UConn Preceptors and to thank you for your many contributions to our experiential education program (IPPE & APPE). We are very fortunate at the University of Connecticut to have such a dedicated group of practitioners willing to be preceptors for our pharmacy students. This year's Preceptor Appreciation Dinner will take place on Thursday, October 29th at Saint Clements Castle, located in Portland, CT. Registration details are available on our website.

I hope to see you at the Preceptor Appreciation Dinner.

Sincerely,



Philip Hritcko

Preceptor News is Going Greener

By: Elizabeth Anderson

It's time to look at the tassel that hung upon your mortar board and notice the color – green! Over the coming years, the Office of Marketing & Communications will be evaluating ways to “green” the school's publications. You may find a different look and feel to our communications. One thing that is here to stay is the electronic version of this newsletter. Not only are an increasing number of people requesting news in this format, it is one small way that we can reduce paper usage, saving the planet and a few dollars along the way. ■

South Park Inn Medical Clinic

By: Laura Blackburn

South Park Inn, an emergency homeless shelter, opened its doors in 1984 in order to provide support for homeless people in Hartford's south end and to advocate for solutions to homelessness. Three years later, in October 1987, a group of medical students from UConn's School of Medicine opened the clinic to provide critical health care for a population in great need. Since its opening, the clinic has provided primary care, counseling and information, and health awareness classes with topics tailored to the needs of residents. Shelter residents receive free, confidential health care that includes the cost of medications, preventative screening for communicable diseases, and HIV and substance use counseling.

For the first year in South Park Inn's Medical Clinic history pharmacy students served on the Board of Directors, embracing a collaborative approach to providing crucial health care services to Hartford's homeless population. Pharmacy students' work with the Medical Clinic is part of the new curriculum's Introductory Pharmacy Practice Program (IPPE), which is designed to place students in real life situations where they have the opportunity to interact with patients, pharmacists, and other medical professionals. Currently, four pharmacy students are volunteering on the Board of Directors, giving them a multifaceted opportunity to interact with underserved populations, as well as assuming key leadership roles.

The unique part about SPIMC is that it is entirely student-run, including the Board of Directors on which pharmacy students Anisa Naka, Rakesh Patel, Kristie Wahl, and John McCarthy sit. These students are part of an interdisciplinary team that oversees the clinic, making sure it operates at the highest level. Kristie Wahl explains, "for the first time ever, pharmacy students were incorporated into the board. As pharmacy students, the board as a whole looked to us for medication advice and discussed what medications the clinic should keep in large quantities as well as medications they can do without." SPIMC, then, provides an important venue in which students can apply and expand upon

their classroom learning—this "real world" learning is what IPPE strives to foster in students. On the Board of Directors, pharmacy students are responsible for working as part of a team to secure medications and supplies for the clinic, organize medication usage records, and create a list of must-have medications. John McCarthy reflected his dedication to team work saying, "as a board member I think the most unique experience is the ability to work as part of an effective inter-professional team. The medical students respect the background that we bring as pharmacy students and vice-versa."

Working with a homeless population presents students with unique opportunities for learning about tailoring patient care to specific patients' needs. Although there are many causes of homelessness, Wahl thinks, "there is a negative stigma attached to being homeless or utilizing such services. Many often think that someone is homeless because they made poor life decisions and therefore deserve to be in their current situation." According to Connecticut Reaching Home, a campaign designed to build political and civil support for the homeless, homelessness in Connecticut is a complicated issue reflecting many different factors including under/unemployment, lack of access to primary and secondary education, access to child care, mental health issues or other disabilities, substance use problems, or little to no family support. Most homeless people have several of these factors and must overcome institutional barriers in order to rejoin mainstream society. South Park Inn Medical Clinic provides an invaluable support network for Connecticut's homeless, making sure to dedicate time and attention to each patient.

The primary goal of SPIMC is to provide much needed medical care to residents while also providing students an opportunity to become familiar with the needs of a homeless population. The clinic is equipped to diagnose and treat minor medical problems and refers patients to other free walk-in area hospitals with services tailored to the



South Park Medical Clinic

homeless population. The clinic functions so effectively because of the motivation and dedication of volunteer students and community physicians. Although volunteers offer free health care to patients, Wahl reflects "it is not free to run the clinic and supplies are not endless. As pharmacy student board members, we asked local pharmacy chains [CVS, Target and Walgreens] for donations to support the clinic and help keep it running." Without such support services, many homeless in Hartford would be left without health care. SPIMC aims to provide physical and mental health treatments to alleviate some of the major causes of homelessness and works towards enfranchising an often invisible, silent population. McCarthy adds that the clinic offers "an extremely valuable service to patients in the Hartford area who would otherwise be left with no place to go."

South Park Inn, as a whole, and the attached Medical Center provide a safe haven for a critical population that often suffers invisibly. Wahl points to the changes she has undergone over the duration of her volunteering, saying "the entire experience has been an eye-opener." Pharmacy students, in conjunction with medical, nursing and dental students, have stepped up to key leadership roles that ensure the continued success of the interdisciplinary clinic and have also learned how to provide services to a population that presents unique challenges. With SPIMC now a part of the new curriculum's IPPE requirements, pharmacy students will have future opportunities to apply their classroom learning to real world experiences—and some may even be inspired to work further with this underserved but important population. ■