Many schools of pharmacy are currently facing the challenge of sustaining and finding sufficient experiential education offerings. Increased demand for high quality rotations has placed an increased need for pharmacy mentors in a variety of practice settings.

Students bring enthusiasm, interest, and eagerness to learn to your practice site. We often hear from preceptors that they find it very rewarding to participate in the experiential programs and that they feel good about shaping the future of the profession of pharmacy.

If you know of any pharmacists or other health care providers interested in participating in our experiential programs please have them contact our Office of Experiential Education to discuss our program objectives and expectations for our experiential rotations.

During the fall 2006 semester we introduced some changes to our Introductory Pharmacy Practice Experiences (IPPE) for our P3 students in anticipation of the new Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE) Standards 2007. The goal of these changes is to better prepare our pharmacy students for their P4 year Advanced Pharmacy Practice Experiences (APPE) and to acclimate them to working in interdisciplinary teams. One of the goals of this specific project was to cultivate an interdisciplinary environment where medical, pharmacy, nursing and premedical students interact and care for patients as a team. This not only gives the students from various health professions an opportunity to care for the medically under-served, but to interact and work with students from other health disciplines.

Students from various health professions and disciplines come together to participate in free walk-in clinics for the Eastern Connecticut Area Health Education Center (AHEC) covenant soup kitchen patrons and migrant farm workers and their families. In addition, we participated with the homeless shelter South Park Inn Medical Clinic located in Hartford. Patrons of the soup kitchens are generally homeless and very low-income earners with mental illness and substance abuse problems. Migrant farm workers usually have difficulty accessing health care services due to rigorous work schedules, lack of transportation, and financial, linguistic, and cultural barriers.

Pharmacy students are also involved with health education activities at the various free clinics. The theme of their activities provides the patrons of these various free clinics with consistent messages promoting access to health care and increasing their self-awareness about healthy choices. This gives pharmacy students the opportunity to work with medically under-served populations and to become familiar with health literacy issues and how poverty impacts our health care system.

Sincerely,

Dr. Philip Hritcko
Director of Experiential Education
Office of Experiential Education
School of Pharmacy
University of Connecticut
69 North Eagleville Road, Unit 3092
Storrs, CT 06269-3092
www.pharmacy.uconn.edu
Pharmacy Students Get to the Point

Each year an average of 90,000 Americans die of vaccine-preventable infections such as influenza and hepatitis B. In 2005, changes were made to Connecticut state guidelines to allow pharmacists throughout the state to administer flu vaccination. With the healthcare field predicting an imminent flu epidemic similar to the one that hit in 1918, it is important to have as many trained inoculation professionals as possible available to citizens.

At the UConn School of Pharmacy, Assistant Clinical Professor Lauren Schlesselman is currently certifying third year professional students in the administration of inoculations. She obtained certification at a two-day APhA training conference where the basics of immunology and vaccine administration were reviewed, the implementation and legal issues were discussed, and hands on vaccine training was provided. “Giving the vaccines to my colleagues bothered me more than receiving them,” said Schlesselman regarding the experience. Back at the School of Pharmacy, she teaches the training to groups of fifteen to twenty students at a time. Class work involves both lecture and hands on experience.

Before students can even enter the classroom, they must complete twelve hours of self-study about inoculation and take a comprehensive test. Friendships and relationships are placed on the line in the student evaluation process. “Dr. Schlesselman’s class was very challenging for me; especially the lab activities. Without the professor’s motivation, I would have been apt to decline taking part in the laboratory. In the end, the immunization program turned out to be a huge success for me and I have applied much of the information I took away from the class in the community and during rotations.”

Many of the students, like Jill, finish the training confident and enthusiastic about their expanded ability to aid patients. Dr. Schlesselman believes the new vaccination training will benefit both the pharmacists and citizens of Connecticut. “Pharmacists will now be able to help inoculate patients who previously may have slipped through the cracks. The School of Pharmacy is ahead of the curve by training these students how to administer vaccinations and it will put them at the front line of improved patient care.”

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pharmacy students’ input is valued by staff. Eventually, students begin to cover their own patients after two weeks at the hospital. Each day, patients’ files are printed and updated, and students meet with their preceptors to discuss medications, treatments, drug interactions, and medical decisions. At the end of their month at the hospital each student develops a presentation on some aspect of their rotation experience they would like to highlight or research further to present to a panel of pharmacists at the hospital.

The three students who completed their rotations at the facility in November, Aaron Denowitz, Bartosz Muskus, and Melissa Sireen, agree that Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center was a unique learning experience for them compared to other rotations they have completed. Bartosz Muskus comments, “My experience at Dartmouth has been very teaching and learning friendly. I feel my suggestions are listened to, and that I am part of a cohesive unit while on rounds.” This sense of social connection is something preceptor Susan Barrill says the Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center tries hard to maintain. “We want pharmacy students who complete rotations at the hospital to feel as though they are part of a team.”

Clinical rotations are very important to sixth year pharmacy students as they finally are able to apply information from text books to real life experiences. Melissa Sireen comments, “I do not believe it would be possible for me to become a pharmacist without gaining experience in the clinical setting. Recalling a concept I have learned in class and actually applying it to a patient is an imperative skill for me to possess in order to become a practicing pharmacist.” Preceptors at Dartmouth help students make the transition from classroom to reality as smooth as possible. After students have completed a rotation at Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center, cardiology preceptor Michael Saracino says, “I hope the students realize how very important a quality clinical rotation is.”

When the facility fades into its haven of trees for the last time, students leave the Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center with valuable clinical experience they did not possess when they first entered the hospital. Through close working relationships, open and collaborative communication, and an environment well suited for learning, students cross the state line back into Connecticut one step closer to their goal of becoming a professional pharmacist.
Job Expo & Interview Day

Normally a quiet refuge for study and rest, the Morosko Student Lounge in the Pharmacy-Biology Building was crammed from corner to corner with people and tables late in the afternoon on September 26th for the annual Job Expo. The Veterans’ Association Women’s Health Center in West Haven, Connecticut was in existence ten years ago but lacked a pharmacist. Dr. Lee joined the clinic in August of 2005. Dr. Lee says she developed the idea to add a pharmacist to the Women’s Clinic team because, “The VA system predominantly serves male patients, although there are a growing number of females enrolling. At VACT, there were already four clinical pharmacists in the ambulatory care clinics but none in the Women’s Health Center. Although they represent a smaller population, the female veterans deserve the same services offered to male veterans.” The Women’s Health Center at the VACT aims women in a range of areas. Services offered include counseling for post-traumatic stress disorder, primary care, and many other health services.

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Pharmacy Preceptors Praised

The 5th Annual Preceptor Appreciation Dinner was held on November 2, 2006 at the Blake Street Cafe in New Haven, Connecticut. The School of Pharmacy would like to extend its thanks to Pfizer, Inc. for their generosity and support which made the event possible. Guests honored to the two preceptors being recognized by pharmacy students from the class of 2006. The individuals were chosen for this award based on their exemplary contributions to the educational development of future pharmacists by demonstrating high standards of professionalism, ethics, and clinical practice.

Nestled in a forest of pine trees, the sheer immensity of the Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center is surprising as it seems to stretch to the horizon. The center offers unique and valuable experiences to students who choose the facility as one of their rotations.

On a clear day, Dartmouth Medical School can be seen through the trees surrounding the Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center. Therefore, it is no surprise that many students, especially Connecticut students who complete rotations in oncology, general medicine, cardiology, infectious disease, medication safety, critical care, or pediatrics, choose this rotation site. Although the rotation site is located about a three hour travel time away, housing is very affordable for students, as most of the rent is supplemented by the center, and parking is free.

As Preceptors of the Year, both Drs. Dang and Sargianis are typical of the preceptors involved in the Experiential Education Program – invested in their students and in the future of their profession by reaching out to future generations of pharmacists with knowledge and encouragement.

**Women’s Health ~ continued from page 3**

Pharmacy, mental health, a breast clinic and gynecological care.

Female veterans enrolled in the VACT Healthcare System are referred to the Pharmacy Clinic for further management of diabetes, hypertension, hyperlipidemia, medication compliance/education, etc. Within the clinic, Dr. Lee collaborates with the physicians and medical resident to improve outcomes for the female veterans. Patients are scheduled for individual appointments with Dr. Lee to discuss medical issues. Dr. Lee reviews life style modifications and self-monitoring techniques with the patients. She believes education is very important because it allows the patients to become more aware of their conditions, possible complications, reasons for medication use, and possible adverse effects. Dr. Lee also orders lab tests and reviews the results with her patients. A vital part of her practice involves follow-up visits with patients regarding their progress.

In addition, Dr. Lee and her students prepare a Women’s Health Newsletter on a monthly basis to share with the affiliates of the clinic. The goal of the newsletter is to highlight issues relevant to women’s health. Recent publications have focused on the new HPV vaccine, Osteonecrosis of the jaw, innovative oral contraceptives, and a story about Heparin phosphonate.

When asked what she finds most rewarding about her job, Dr. Lee says, “I really enjoy educating patients and helping them become more actively involved with their own care. It is very satisfying to see the change in the patients from the results of their hard work. Through lifestyle modifications and medication education and compliance, patients are able to get better control of their diabetes, hypertension, and cholesterol. Furthermore, patients learn more about their medications, why they are taking them, and how to take the medications appropriately. Most importantly, students are able to see what an impact pharmacists can make and hopefully build upon their experiences learned in the clinic.”

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The medical center pharmacy department prides itself on the high quality preceptors offered to students who come to the hospital for a rotation. Theriault states, “The preceptors are well trained because they have significant experience, and they really want to teach.” The preceptors themselves readily second this statement. Jeff Low, a preceptor in pediatrics says, “Being a preceptor is a beneficial experience for all involved. The students are always learning, asking questions, and observing how we do things. When they challenge our practices, it allows us to learn new techniques being taught to students.” Many of the preceptors agree the students’ youthful energy and inquisitive mind with their healthy doses of skepticism help keep them on their toes and current in the rapidly changing field.