



UConn Pharmacy Students Volunteer at the NAFC CARE Clinic

By: Aloise Brewster

Over 1,000 appointments were made before doors even opened for the National Association of Free Clinic's C.A.R.E. (Communities Are Responding Everyday) Clinic at Hartford's Connecticut Convention Center on February 3, 2010. The clinic allowed Connecticut residents without health insurance the chance to seek medical care free of charge. Among the more than 1,100 volunteers working the clinic were 16 University of Connecticut pharmacy students and 12 pharmacists from the local pharmacy community, who spent the afternoon meeting with patients who had questions about their medications. This group of volunteers also served as a resource to the other health care providers at the clinic, providing them with drug information and recommendations for cost effective medication treatment options.

Dr. Philip Hritcko, director of the Office of Experiential Education and assistant clinical professor of pharmacy practice, organized the School of Pharmacy's involvement at the clinic. In the days before the event, Dr. Hritcko sent an e-mail out to his colleagues, UConn School of Pharmacy alumni, and the Connecticut Pharmacists Association (CPA) requesting volunteers to be stationed in groups at four "Ask the Pharmacist" pods set up around the clinic. "In a perfect world it



Pharmacist Lisa Bragaw [far right] with UConn School of Pharmacy students at the NAFC CARE Clinic.

would be ideal to have either two pharmacists or one pharmacist and one pharmacy student at each of the 'Ask the Pharmacist' stations," Dr. Hritcko said in the e-mail.

Dr. Hritcko's hopes were met and then some, with two pharmacists and three to four pharmacy students volunteering at each "Ask the Pharmacist" pod on the day of the clinic. Rupangi Datta, a P3 student, said that many of the Pharm.D. students who volunteered at the clinic were fulfilling one of two volunteer sessions required for graduation. Datta compared the atmosphere at the



A Message from the Director

I want to take this opportunity to update everyone regarding the UConn Office of Experiential Education's (OEE) transition to a new rotation management system. The Education Management System (EMS) is currently being phased out and the School of Pharmacy has selected a new rotation management system through a company called RXinsider, based in West Warwick, Rhode Island. The RXinsider product line includes RXportfolios, RXoutcomes and RXpreceptor. A number of New England schools/colleges of pharmacy have selected this electronic rotation management system and are either using or transitioning to this system. You may have already seen their electronic portfolio system (RXportfolio) currently being used by our pharmacy students on rotations.

RXpreceptor represents the next generation of experiential management software for schools/colleges of pharmacy. As the latest component in RXinsider's AcademicSuiteRx, RXpreceptor allows for detailed student-preceptor-site management, rotation scheduling management, student-preceptor evaluation management, requirements tracking, and is customizable and scalable with over a dozen additional experiential management modules from which to choose.

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C.A.R.E. Clinic to her first volunteer experience at an outdoor migrant farm workers clinic held during the summer in Cheshire, Connecticut. "It was a lot different," she said. "There were a lot fewer patients there."

With patients lining up two hours before the clinic doors opened, Datta's reflection is not surprising. Patients came from all over Connecticut with medical needs and questions regarding their prescriptions. Rich Kiley, a P4 student, said that patients generally had questions prepared ahead of time for the pharmacists, and noticed a trend in topics for these questions. "The number one issue patients are having is cost – most of them are coming with questions on affordable drugs," Kiley said.

To this end, these UConn volunteers had reference materials available to point patients in the right direction for affordable drug refills. This included a catalog of pharmaceutical drugs and their listed prices at various pharmacies throughout Connecticut, which allowed patients to choose a pharmacy that best fit their needs and budget. They also offered alternative options in the event that a drug prescribed to a patient had a generic form that was more affordable, in which case they could refer him or her to a doctor who could write a new prescription for that generic form.

Kiley went on to say that it was after these financial questions the patients began to inquire about the drugs themselves. In addition to answering their questions, UConn volunteers handed out information that included questions that patients should routinely ask their physicians regarding their

prescriptions in order to stay informed about their own health. They stressed the importance of patients telling doctors what prescriptions they are already taking to protect themselves from mixing drugs dangerously, and to disclose information about their symptoms to ensure the correct treatment for them.

The pharmacists and UConn pharmacy students also checked prescriptions given out by doctors at the clinic itself, making sure that everything was prescribed correctly and would not interact negatively with a drug the patient might already be taking. They answered questions on side effects, risks, and dosage, as well as any other inquiries patients may have had regarding their prescriptions.

With such a large patient turn out, no amount of volunteering was underappreciated. Lisa Bragaw, a field coordinator for the UConn School of Pharmacy, a licensed pharmacist, and a post-baccalaureate Pharm.D. student at the University of Florida, noted the importance of events like the C.A.R.E. Clinic. "Something like 83% of the people here have jobs, they just don't have health insurance," Bragaw said. She said she respected the difficulty these patients must be facing in having to find free clinics to meet their health care needs. Bragaw has also volunteered at the NBC 30 Health and Wellness Festival for the past three years. She said that with so many people unable to afford medical care, it is important for those who are capable of reaching out in some real way, to do so. ■

You have probably been receiving emails from RXinsider inviting you to access your new RXpreceptor accounts. This will allow you to access your new affiliate profile and to update your information listed in RXpreceptor. Please take a moment to review this information and to update your affiliate account information. If at any time you have questions or need assistance please feel free to contact either me or Mary Ann Phaneuf at the OEE.

We will continue to finish all Advanced Pharmacy Practice Experiences (APPE) "P4" rotations in this current calendar year (2010) in EMS. Preceptors involved with our Introductory Pharmacy Practice Experiences (IPPE) for our Institutional P2 students will also continue to use EMS until January 1, 2011. You will then be instructed to convert to the RxPreceptor rotation management system effective January 1st. Preceptors involved with our Community IPPE program (PI students) should start utilizing the RXpreceptor management system. The PI UConn pharmacy students have already been granted access to RXpreceptor and their Community IPPEs have been scheduled through this new rotation management system. Therefore all student evaluations and attendance logs need to be processed through RXpreceptor for the PI students.

We will continue to provide you with more information and updates to assist with this transition. We appreciate your understanding and patience as we transition into RXpreceptor. I'm confident you will find RXpreceptor easier to use and offering better functionality than the old system.

Happy Holidays!



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Backus Hospital and UConn School of Pharmacy Launch Anticoagulation Online Program

By: Megan Zabiliansky

When Dr. Michael Smith began his professional career in pharmacy at William W. Backus Hospital in 1997, he was asked to join the Anticoagulation Clinic, a new program created just one month before his arrival. More than ten years later, as one of the clinical coordinators with Dr. Victoria Lambert, Dr. Smith is part of a second initiative—an online program through which pharmacists and nurses can become certified in anticoagulation therapy.

“In 2009, Backus Hospital and UConn came together to create this new certification program for providers to take online courses and do a traineeship. It is fully approved and we are hoping to see it come to light in the next month or so. It is very exciting to see,” said Dr. Lambert.

“This program is focused and gets people started if they want to get into the anticoagulation field. It is accessible and provides information that is easy to digest and makes it easier to understand and build up from there,” added Dr. Smith.

According to the Backus Hospital website, “more than 900,000 people in the U.S. are estimated to develop clots every year. Of these, 380,000 develop deep-vein thrombosis, which is a clot that occurs commonly in the inner veins of the leg. Clots can also form due to prosthetic heart valves or atrial fibrillation [a type of abnormal heart rhythm].”

These types of clots can cause serious medical problems and can even lead to a stroke. Today, warfarin is the main anticoagulant prescribed to patients. Taken daily at a dosage determined by a care provider and blood test, it dramatically reduces a person's risk of forming a clot. Warfarin therapy is an integral part of the services provided at the Backus Anticoagulation Clinic.

With so many people at risk of developing a clot, this new, online program was created to enhance the practice of pharmacists and assist pharmacists in making sound clinical decisions to affect the outcome of anticoagulation therapy for the patients they serve.

Participants are required to complete ten hours of Continuing Pharmacy Education activities before they participate in a two-day traineeship at the Backus Anticoagulation Clinic, located in Norwich, CT. These activities include “Encore Presentations from the November 24, 2009, 2nd Annual Anticoagulation Symposium” and new online programs such as “Risk Management in Anticoagulation” and “Developing an Anticoagulation Clinic/Service,” which range in duration from half-hour to one-hour segments.

Then, Dr. Smith and Dr. Lambert discuss point of care testing, the patient interview process, and participants will observe the clinic in action. On the second day, participants will conduct interviews, perform testing, and evaluate the treatment regimen themselves. The program will wrap up with a final session to discuss their progress and answer any remaining questions concerning involvement in an anticoagulation management service.

“It is very rewarding to provide something that people find useful. I learn new things as well and am able to share that with the rest of my staff,” Dr. Smith stated of his involvement with this invaluable program.



Dr. Victoria Lambert of the William W. Backus Hospital's Anticoagulation Clinic

Dr. Smith also noted that with a lot of new oral agents due on the market, some people are predicting a demise of warfarin making them hesitant to enter into this field. “There are, however, many gaps of knowledge with these new oral agents and warfarin will be around for many years to come. People need the care we are providing,” he said.

As online education is becoming a norm, Dr. Smith notes that this program between Backus and UConn offers the “best part of live Continuing Education activities with all of the convenience of the internet and being able to complete the requirement on your own time.”

For more information and to register online, interested participants can go to <http://pharmacyce.uconn.edu/anticoagulation.html>.

Save the Date

The School of Pharmacy's Preceptor Appreciation Dinner will take place on Thursday, October 27, 2011 at Saint Clements Castle in Portland, CT.



Did You Know...

Victoria Lambert, along with Ruth Korch [below center,] was named Preceptor of the Year in 2009?



Ready, Willing, and Able

By: Elizabeth Wood

Able Care Pharmacy & Medical Supplies isn't a corner store, found on a prime piece of commercial real estate. Located in the back of the Enfield Medical Center building, Darlene Able has instead heard it referred to as a "speakeasy pharmacy," something that is "hard to find, but worth it." For Darlene, who has owned and operated Able Care Pharmacy since 1988, this "secret" pharmacy is definitely something worth discovering.

When you walk into Able Care Pharmacy you are greeted with aisles of walkers and medical bath supplies. Designer canes are set up in the aisle, with many colors and designs from which to choose. A small section with special diabetic socks and nylons for people suffering from varicose veins further demonstrates that this is not a typical pharmacy. Able Care Pharmacy actively participates in niche marketing, catering primarily towards the needs of the elderly as a way to differentiate itself from the multiple chain pharmacies that are abundant in the town of Enfield. The employees are friendly and helpful, making certain that everyone who walks into the store is assisted as quickly as possible.

The human interaction between patient and pharmacist is precisely what drew Darlene Able to pharmacy in the first place. Darlene grew up going to a small town pharmacy, and recalls becoming interested in the field because "it was a good blend of patient interaction, biology, and chemistry." She graduated from the University of Connecticut in 1980 and began working at a pharmacy that, eight years later, she would buy and rename Able Care Pharmacy. She has been an active alumni member of the UConn pharmacy program since her graduation, serving one term on the Experiential Education Advisory Board and currently serving on the School of Pharmacy's Advisory Board. Her work on these boards has allowed her the opportunity to collaborate with others to help shape the future of the School of Pharmacy.

She also has taken on the role of preceptor, giving one UConn student a month the chance to gain practical

community pharmacy experience. At Able Care, students learn not only how to work 'the bench' and retail, but they get a chance to look beyond the profession of pharmacy "to see what it could be," from providing counseling and patient care to organizing an outreach project.

For Darlene, taking on students is a "great symbiotic relationship." It's a collaborative effort that not only allows the students a chance to learn from someone who is experienced in the field, but also gives Darlene the opportunity to stay current with the ever changing industry. Darlene loves having students on rotation for all the things they can teach her.

Students love learning from Darlene. Dr. Renée Larouche, a recent UConn alumna spent a rotation at Able Care Pharmacy in the spring of 2009. "I learned a great deal on the rotation and it was by far one of my favorites" She said. For Renée, the rotation consisted of counseling patients, learning about doctor calls and clarifications, researching drug information and learning how to run the business aspect of a pharmacy. These skills are still indispensable to Renée, who currently works as a pharmacy manager at Target which, much like Able Care Pharmacy, allows her to interact and develop a relationship with her patients, similar to the ones she observed during her time at Able Care.

When asked about the profession of pharmacy, Darlene answers with her own thoughtful question: "Is pharmacy a service or commodity?" For Darlene, it is a service, where the ultimate goal is for a patient to fully understand their medicine, and to discover the best possible outcome for each patient. "Pharmacists are problem solvers," Darlene asserts. At Able Care they certainly do their share of problem solving. Located within a medical building, they work to collaborate with the doctors to offer optimal patient outcomes. Able Care is nationally accredited to bill Medicare B for the convenience of their senior patients. These older patients "have more needs and want to stay in their own homes." As their pharmacist, Darlene helps



Darlene Able, owner of Able Care Pharmacy & Medical Supplies in Enfield, CT, believes that taking students on rotation is a "great symbiotic relationship."

to keep them healthy and informed about their medical decisions, as well as affording easy access to the medical supplies that will make it easier for them to stay independent.

Another "solution" that Able Care offers to their patients is a program called 1 Price, a savings club that allows patients to save on prescriptions by buying generic drugs in bulk, their motto being "because everyone should be able to afford their prescription medications, every day." Able Care also offers compounding services to their patients, customizing drugs and doses that are not commercially available.

Another unique product offered by Able Care is their homeopathic alternative medicine. Patients who are interested in using natural remedies can find many alternatives at Able Care, and can be assured of the reputation of the suppliers. Able Care can assist in developing a natural medicine regimen for their patients that can work concurrently with traditional medicine. On top of it all Able Care offers various veterinary supplies for pets, including calming remedies for high strung dogs.

Darlene's dedication to her patients, the University of Connecticut and the pharmaceutical industry is certainly commendable. Able Care Pharmacy is a thriving independent pharmacy that caters towards the needs of the patients. Darlene Able and Able Care Pharmacy will continue to thrive treating one patient at a time. ■

Lisa Bragaw ~ Field Coordinator, Student, and Yoga Instructor

By: Aloise Brewater

Before being hired by the University of Connecticut School of Pharmacy, Lisa Bragaw had plenty to keep her busy: she is a post-baccalaureate Pharm.D. student at the University of Florida, an active member of the Connecticut Pharmacists' Association, a teacher at Three Rivers Community College, and the mother of three boys. This spring, Ms. Bragaw added field coordinator for the UConn Pharmacy School to her schedule.

In her position as field coordinator, Ms. Bragaw works closely with UConn Pharm.D. students at their clinical rotations and meets with preceptors to make sure everything is running on track. When she was getting started in her new position this past February, she expressed excitement at being able to offer students guidance and support. "I've done some volunteer work with the students already, and I just loved doing that," she said.

Ms. Bragaw's previous involvement with UConn students included outreach programs such as Cornucopia Fest 2009 and various health fairs in the fall semester, and she has herself served as a preceptor for UConn pharmacy students while working at Brooks Pharmacy in Essex, CT. Ms. Bragaw also explores her interest in student experiences and education by teaching a pharmacy technician training course at Three Rivers Community College in Norwich, CT. This spring was her third semester teaching the course, which prepares students to take the national certification exam.

Ms. Bragaw graduated from Northeastern University in 1993 with a Bachelor of Science in Pharmacy. While at school, she focused not on laboratory work, but on experiential and community pharmacy. She recently decided to return to school to complete her Pharm.D. and enrolled in the Working Professional Doctor of Pharmacy Distance Learning Degree Program at the University of Florida, a program recommended to her by Dean Robert L. McCarthy. Through this program, she will be able to complete her Pharm.D. via online classes, DVDs and



"I've done some volunteer work with the students already, and I just loved doing that," says Lisa Bragaw, field coordinator in the Office of Experiential Education.

monthly meetings in Massachusetts. She expects to complete the program with her Pharm.D. in 2011.

Ms. Bragaw's background in community pharmacy allows her to express her interest in working closely with people, and she is particularly involved in medication therapy management (MTM). She is currently involved in MTM through PharmNetEx and the Connecticut Pharmacists Association (CPA). Specifically, she is working on a project with UConn's Dr. Tom Buckley that offers MTM to Cambodian refugees in Connecticut and California. In this program, pharmacists communicate with Cambodian refugees both in person and via video conferencing. "It's an exciting program," Ms. Bragaw said.

In addition to her work on the MTM Committee, Ms. Bragaw serves as CPA board member and chairperson of the Continuing Education Committee. She is also involved with a variety of other CPA projects. Between her continuing education, teaching, her work for the CPA, and her new position as field coordinator, Ms. Bragaw has plenty of responsibilities to juggle, but she does not seem to mind. "I love it," she said. "I can coordinate things so that they overlap well. The harder thing is coordinating my kids' sports schedule with the rest of my work – I have three boys." Despite her busy schedule, she finds unique ways to keep herself focused and organized. "I teach yoga!" she explained. "That's my favorite job. That's how I keep it all together: I eat a lot of chocolate and do yoga." ■

Students Volunteer at Diabetes Expo

By: Elizabeth Wood

Last April, University of Connecticut pharmacy students volunteered at the annual Diabetes Expo at the Hartford Convention Center. The eight students who attended the expo manned the School of Pharmacy booth under the direction of Peter Tyczkowski, R.Ph., where they assisted patients in filling out File of Life cards and performing cholesterol screenings.

File of Life cards are a complete documentation of patient medical history, medications and allergies, which are compiled into wallet size cards and placed on the patient's refrigerator and in their wallet. These cards provide information about the patient's existing medical conditions in the event of an emergency. UConn students developed skills in patient interviewing, as they worked with the patients to recall their medications and record them onto the File of Life.

Trudy Lewis, who at the time was a P3 student, spent the morning completing ten File of Life cards. This was her first time attending the expo and she was surprised at the amount of interest it attracted. She also remarked on the number of medications some people are on. "About 50% knew the majority of their medications," she recalls, while the others were given blank cards to fill out at home.

Jeffery Lagasse, who was also a P3 student, was checking cholesterol reading almost non-stop all morning. "The time is flying by," he remarked, having checked at least twenty people in an hour and a half. This was his first time performing finger pricks, and he acknowledges that this is "different from what I normally do." Lagasse felt like participating in the Expo gave him a different look on pharmacy.

The Diabetes Expo is sponsored by the Connecticut chapter of America Diabetics Association. The School of Pharmacy has attended the Expo for the last ten years. Professor Tyczkowski sees the Diabetes Expo as "a good opportunity for students" as it helps them to learn more about the human connection in the pharmaceutical field. The School of Pharmacy's involvement with the Diabetes Expo also puts the name of the University of Connecticut out into the community. ■

Service Learning in Pharmacy Practice Experiences

By: Philip Hritcko

As the profession of pharmacy changes from a focus on the provision of the drug product to the provision of patient care so does the educational institutions of our profession. Curricular changes are required that will prepare the future pharmacy practitioners to fill the evolving roles of pharmacists. The Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE), which is the accrediting body for all schools and colleges of pharmacy, revises their Accreditation Standards and Guidelines periodically to reflect the changes occurring within the profession of pharmacy. In 2006, ACPE released revised accreditation standards and guidelines that became effective as of July 1, 2007 and are referred to as "Standards 2007." Standards 2007 placed greater emphasis on experiential education establishing this area as a critical element in the education and training of our future pharmacists.

Experiential Education now represents 30% of the curriculum for all schools and colleges of pharmacy throughout the United States. Schools and colleges of pharmacy are now required to meet these new experiential standards through a variety of pharmacy practice experiences (PPE) including Introductory Pharmacy Practice Experiences (IPPE) and Advanced Pharmacy Practice Experiences (APPE). Standards 2007 requires that IPPE and APPE comprise no less than 300 and 1440 hours (5% and 25%), respectively, of the Doctor of Pharmacy curriculum. These experiences assist student pharmacists in the integration and application of their didactic "classroom" knowledge to the practice site and patients that they serve. The overall goal of these experiences is to produce a graduate pharmacist capable of and committed to delivering excellent patient care.

The University of Connecticut School of Pharmacy, as part of our new revised curriculum, has recently incorporated service learning into the curriculum of our IPPE courses during the student pharmacists' third professional (P3) year. Service learning is not new but there are a

growing number of educators who are exploring and utilizing this pedagogy. Educators, especially in the area of experiential education, are finding the benefits of service-learning to both the students and community and are incorporating these programs into their experiential programs.

Service-Learning is a method of teaching, learning, and outreach which intentionally links community service to an academic course or program through specific learning goals, structured reflection, and assessment. Service-learning programs are distinguished from other approaches to experiential education by their intention to benefit the provider and the recipient of the service equally, as well as to ensure equal focus on both the service being provided and the learning that is occurring.

To do this successfully the service-learning course needs to be designed to ensure that both the service enhances the learning and that the learning enhances the service. A great example of this is where our UConn student pharmacists are taught the proper technique on how to take a blood pressure reading on a patient with a stethoscope and blood pressure cuff. Students practice on simulator arms and on their student partners in a lab setting for this portion of the course. A service-learning course then integrates the theories and skills learned from the lab to providing blood pressure screenings to seniors at a local senior citizen center. While the intent of this program is to provide blood pressure screenings to seniors, the course also helps the students to perform blood pressure readings and to counsel patients on the disease state of hypertension. In this type of service-learning course, the focus is on both the student's learning and on providing a service to the community. Therefore, in this example both the students' and the senior citizens' benefit from the service provided. It is this type of balance that distinguishes service-learning from all other experiential education programs.

This is just one example of the many service-learning projects that has been incorporated into the UConn School of Pharmacy experiential education program. In addition, UConn student pharmacists are involved with the South Park Homeless Shelter, Willimantic Covenant Soup Kitchen, and Migrant Farm Workers' Clinics providing free health care throughout the year. These mobile free clinics are interprofessional student run activities done in conjunction with the UConn Schools of Medicine, Pharmacy, Dentistry and Nursing. The goal of these activities is to introduce health professions students to the importance of community engagement, encourage their collaboration as future members of the health care team, and to work to reduce problems in health care access experienced by underserved populations in Connecticut. UConn student pharmacists are also involved with numerous service-learning projects associated with health fairs, senior centers, National Primary Care Week (NPCW) just to name a few.

UConn student pharmacists are engaged in numerous activities with their communities. We are, therefore, always looking for pharmacists willing to mentor our students who are engaged in these service learning activities. If you would like more information or would like to volunteer as a pharmacist mentor for one of these service learning activities, please feel free to contact the Office of Experiential Education at 860-486-1592. ■

Did You Know...

We are always looking for volunteers for our community outreach events? If you, or a pharmacist you know, is interested in working with students at such events as health fairs, community clinics, and shelters, please contact our office.