INTERNSHIP TAKES CLASSROOM INTO THE "REAL WORLD"

For pharmacy students, classroom lessons only go so far. "Real-world" experience is necessary to complete their education. Students seek this experience through jobs or volunteer work in a variety of settings, from retail drug stores and hospital or clinic pharmacies to human services agencies and research laboratories. However, these settings usually represent the clinical aspects of pharmacy and do not offer insight into drug development, marketing, managed care pharmacy, pharmacy association management, or other areas that aid students in their career choices and professional development. Experience in these nontraditional settings is important if a student is to gain a well-rounded education. But finding such an educational opportunity may present a challenge. This article describes one such program, a summer internship that offered insight into managed care, drug development and the pharmaceutical industry, association management, and writing and editing academic articles.

AK PHARMACY CONSULTANTS SUMMER INTERNSHIP

AK Pharmacy Consultants, a Santa Barbara, California, pharmaceutical and health care management consulting firm, initiated a four-week intensive summer internship stressing the importance of both written and interpersonal communication skills, as well as continuing education and self-

motivated learning. The internship allowed for interaction with professional associations, pharmaceutical companies, home infusion services, managed care organizations, and educational program developers. The internship had three goals: (1) to provide experience in and exposure to the pharmaceutical industry, managed care organizations, pharmacy consulting services, state pharmacy associations, pharmacy-related legislation, formulary development principles, and home infusion abstract services; (2) to improve communication skills through written essays, speech presentations, and off-site rotations; and (3) to help students understand the role of pharmacy in the current market and identify the external forces that will influence the pharmacy profession's future in health care delivery.

The internship included several activities that offered insight into real-world aspects of clinical pharmacy, managed care pharmacy, and drug development. These included on-site rotations at various organizations; hands-on preparation of a marketing proposal literature abstracts, and executive summaries, as well as participation in field visits and meetings. In addition, the internship required a review of literature on managed care principles and pharmacoeconomic basics.

ON-SITE INVOLVEMENT

To observe everyday operations and gain exposure to

various practice settings, the intern visited the offices of the California Pharmacists Association (CPhA), Pharmaceutical Care Network (PCN), and Integrated Pharmaceutical Services (IPS), all in Sacramento. These on-site rotations involved spending a full day at each site and provided an opportunity to experience the dynamics, mission, and operations of each organization. The intern also visited the headquarters of Amgen, a pharmaceuticals firm, to gain insight into drug development and marketing processes.

The rotation at CPhA provided exposure to the structure and mission of a state pharmaceutical association. The intern learned about association management and legislative and lobbying activities. The rotation included a brief tour of the State Capitol and a visit with one of CPhA's lobbyists.

The experiences at PCN and IPS highlighted issues in managed care pharmacy. By allowing interns to participate in customer services and claims, the rotation at PCN provided an understanding of services offered by a pharmacy benefit manager. The intern also used client-services software and learned about buying services. The rotation at IPS offered exposure to its work in formulary management, disease state management, and clinical services. The intern learned about financial aspects of formulary design, such as the need for cost analysis during drug selection processes. IPS staff also reviewed therapeutic and financial considerations of

formulary design and discussed their philosophy and protocol on disease management for various patient populations.

Next, a visit to Amgen gave the intern insight into drug development and marketing. Participation in meetings and staff discussions provided information about the development of a new drug. Further, the experience offered a look at the marketing strategies that companies employ in launching a new product or service.

BACK TO AK TO HIT THE BOOKS

The intern saw the real world of managed care pharmacy, association management, and drug development and marketing. Education complete, right? Not quite. On return to AK Pharmacy Consultants, the intern was responsible for identifying and abstracting three pertinent primary-literature sources on one aspect of pharmaceutical care—home infusion services. This exercise was designed to increase the student's understanding of specialties and boost her confidence in her ability to write and edit academic articles.

The internship at AK Pharmacy Consultants picked up where the Pharm.D. education left off. It provided a well-rounded, real-world education. To prepare future health care professionals adequately, we need to anticipate the needs of the changing

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HEALTH CARE COSTS MODERATELY ON THE RISE

Total health plan cost for active and retired workers of private- and public-sector employers with 10 or more employees rose 2.5% in 1996, for a third year of low single-digit increases, according to a nationwide survey of more than 3,200 employers by benefits consultants Foster Higgins. The 11th annual survey found total health benefit costs averaged \$3,915 per employee in 1996, compared with \$3,821 in 1995, when costs rose 2.1%. Costs remained moderate for several reasons, including low inflation in the cost of medical goods and services, more employees enrolling in managed care plans (including retired employees), and an actual

decrease in the average cost of coverage in health maintenance organizations.

TREND TOWARD MEDICAID MANAGED CARE CONTINUES

Six states—Colorado, Iowa, Massachusetts, Oregon, Utah, and Washington—have shifted all of their Medicaid patients into managed care. More than 75% of Medicaid patients are in managed care programs in eight states. Overall, Medicaid managed care enrollment has gone from 2.7 million in 1991 to 11.6 million in 1995, a 330% increase; enrollment went up by 51% in 1995 alone. Medicare is following a similar trend, with managed care enrollment up from 1.6 million in 1987 to 3.1 million in 1995.

DOES HEALTH FRAUD STATUTE HURT MANAGED CARE?

According to a commentary in the Winter issue of *Health Affairs*, James F. Blumstein claims that while health care fraud provisions in the new health insurance reform law (PL 104-191) will help expand the number of Medicare and Medicaid risk contractors, other provisions in the law will continue to stifle managed care and other market-based solutions to the nation's health care problems. Blumstein observed, "Although well intended, the extremely broad interpretation of the law serves as a major potential obstacle to the continued evolution and rationalization of the health care marketplace in response to competitive market forces and pressures to contain costs."

LABELING/PACKAGING ERRORS DOWN, FDA SAYS

FDA has reported 16 fewer product recalls involving labeling and/or packaging errors in 1996 than there were in 1995. This continues a four-year decline; 41 products were recalled in 1994 and 54 in 1993. In recent years, the agency has made a concerted effort to tighten controls over packaging and labeling, by sponsoring training seminars and mailings, investigating labeling operations during plant inspections, and following up with enforcement actions. The 1996 figures suggest that all of these activities are having the desired effect. Over-the-counter products accounted for only 17% of the recalled products in 1996; this is down from 29% in 1995.

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pharmacy is necessary to fulfill these future needs and enable pharmacists to stay abreast of the demands placed on a changing profession.

RECIPE FOR A GOOD INTERNSHIP

An internship that enables a student to gain an understanding of all the forces contributing to the future of the profession should provide:

- ▲ an understanding of pharmacy's role and influence in the global marketplace;

- ▲ exposure to the legislative process and law of pharmacy;
- ▲ an introduction to the marketing and development of new drug product lines;
- ▲ a better grasp of managed care concepts and issues;
- ▲ exposure to the concepts of pharmacoeconomics; and
- ▲ an overall picture of the pharmaceutical environment—past, present, and future.

Any student who wants such an opportunity can take

the lead in making it happen. One only needs a willing pharmacy professional to serve as a mentor and cooperative local companies. The breadth and scope of the internship experience will depend on the student's interests as well as the mentor's resources and work background. With the help of professional peers, state and national pharmacy organizations, and the pharmaceutical industry, the mentor and student will be able to draw from myriad resources to

tailor a program to meet the student's needs and interests. ■

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