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THE JOHNS HOPKINS HOSPITAL:

A Summer Internship

Adam Smith, College of Pharmacy

ABSTRACT

Adam Smith, a native of Richmond, Indiana, is an advanced pharmacy practice student in the College of Pharmacy at Purdue University. In this article, he describes how career exploration through a summer internship with The Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, Maryland solidified his desire to pursue a career in pharmacy administration.

INTRODUCTION

I grew up just east of Indianapolis in a town called Richmond, Indiana. I graduated from Richmond High School in 2009 and completed my bachelor's degree in biology at Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana. Currently, I am a PharmD Candidate in my final year of the Purdue University College of Pharmacy Professional Program. This is minimally a six-year program: the first two or more years are prepharmacy requisites, and the last four years are the professional program. In my case (like many students), I will have completed eight years of college before I graduate in 2017 as a licensed pharmacist.

By the end of my second year of the professional program in the College of Pharmacy, I had a solid clinical background of common disease states including chronic kidney disease, hypertension, diabetes, hyperlipidemia, coronary artery disease, heart failure, and common psychological disorders. I find all these areas of clinical practice interesting, but specific curricula in my courses influenced my desire to pursue a career in pharmacy administration. During my courses, I learned quite a bit

about hospital pharmacy; I took a course called Population Health Management where I realized the impact that I could have on large-scale patient care, rather than through one-on-one patient interactions. I also completed an internship with the Purdue Center for Medication Safety Advancement in Indianapolis. There I learned about pharmacy from a process standpoint, with an emphasis on reducing medication and hospital-related errors. I was excited about the idea of pairing my desire to help patients from a clinical standpoint with my interest in pharmacy leadership and management.

All pharmacy students complete a series of introductory practice experiences throughout the curriculum, in addition to a final year of advanced experiences. Pharmacy employment and summer internships are not required, but they are encouraged as additions to these experiences. I chose to work for the Indiana University (IU) Health network throughout the professional program at Purdue. My experience at IU Health ignited the passion I have for hospital pharmacy. It made me realize that pharmacists don't just count pills and put them in bottles. At that point, I knew I wanted to explore an additional internship opportunity to complement this hospital experience.

INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE

The Johns Hopkins Hospital is one of the most well-known and highly ranked hospitals in the country (see Figure 1). The night I came across the internship opportunity online, I was blown away—I knew I had to apply. The Johns Hopkins Hospital is a 1,145-bed teaching hospital and biomedical research facility

Figure 1. The Johns Hopkins Hospital.

located in downtown Baltimore, Maryland. Its mission is to improve world health by setting the standard of excellence in patient care. Since its opening in 1889, the hospital has demonstrated a strong commitment to service, with over 300 programs and initiatives to meet community needs (The Johns Hopkins Hospital, n.d.).

The Johns Hopkins Pharmacy Internship Program is led by distinguished pharmacy leaders from all across the country. Daniel M. Ashby, Chief Pharmacy Officer of The Johns Hopkins Health System, takes great pride in the internship program and its contributions. In 2011, Ashby received the distinguished Harvey A. K. Whitney Lecture Award, which recognizes individuals who make outstanding contributions to health-system pharmacy—one of the highest honors in the profession (American Society of Health-System Pharmacists, n.d.). The internship program offers over 25 different specialty areas of study for pharmacy students, including pharmacy administration, critical care/surgery, oncology, and investigational drug services. This minimum-eight-week, paid internship is open to second- and third-year pharmacy students. I was an Inpatient Pharmacy Administration intern for 14 weeks during the summer between my second and third professional years.

The relationships I built during my internship will forever be etched in my mind. The best and brightest talents were there from all over the world. Dr. Todd Nesbit, Director

of Pharmacy Patient Care Services at The Johns Hopkins Hospital, was my preceptor and mentor; little did I know how much time we would spend together. His office was my office, his meetings were my meetings, and his projects became my projects. As I reflect on my time at Johns Hopkins, I remember all the valuable lessons Dr. Nesbit taught me. Each week we would discuss my performance. Looking back, I can see that he strategically placed me in situations where I could use my personal strengths, allowing me to build confidence. We also discussed areas for improvement and how I could build upon the previous weeks' performance. I learned about myself as a person, a leader, and a future pharmacist.

The Ronald McDonald House Charities (RMHC) of Baltimore opened in 1982 and is part of an international network serving children and families in 54 countries. Their mission is to create, find, and support programs that directly improve the health and well-being of children. Many Johns Hopkins Children's Center patients are clients of the Ronald McDonald House. The house provides a home away from home for these children and their families. The house also helps fund children's programs in the community (Ronald McDonald House Charities of Baltimore, n.d.). Baltimore has a large number of Medically Underserved Areas (MUAs), with a shortage of primary care resources (Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, 2015).

Figure 2. The Ronald McDonald House of Baltimore, Maryland.

COMMUNITY IMPACT

Our group of interns was particularly passionate about wanting to become part of the Baltimore community, and thus pursued a service project for the summer. We met before work to discuss ideas; we wanted to have a direct impact on the community. Ultimately, we agreed to a project that would benefit The Ronald McDonald House, since it had ties to The Johns Hopkins Hospital (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Adam and some of his co-interns at the Ronald McDonald House of Baltimore, Maryland.

Our project idea was simple. Families staying at the house have access to a kitchen that is supplied with basic utensils and food necessities such as milk, cereal, and bread, but it was difficult for them to make home-cooked meals. We decided to cook and serve a large breakfast casserole and homemade pancakes for the families to enjoy on Saturday morning. We ate with them and listened to their inspiring stories. Some families had been there for a few days, but other families had been away from home for months. There were families from different countries that didn't even speak English or know the area. We did our best to help them. The purpose of our service wasn't to collect data or statistics, but to show families we cared about them and their children. We served over 25 people that day, and many families expressed their gratitude. That day will always be a highlight of my time with The Johns Hopkins Pharmacy Internship Program. We made a difference that day, and

Figure 4. Visitor wristbands at the Ronald McDonald House of Baltimore, Maryland

our intern class grew closer because of it. It showed the true character of my fellow interns, and I am honored to have served alongside them (see Figure 4).

I have since participated in several service-related events on the Purdue campus, with many relating to children and our community. As a future pharmacist, I consider this profession one that is devoted to lifelong service. It is our responsibility to not only serve our patients individually, but also to impact our community as a whole.

STUDENT IMPACT

The Johns Hopkins Pharmacy Internship enhanced my pharmacy leadership skills and my ability to work with other health care professionals. Having two years of professional school under my belt before this experience, in addition to my employment experience, I had a solid understanding of hospital practice and could apply my disease state knowledge when needed in the internship. For example, another intern and I assisted the Transitions of Care Committee to create patient education handouts for high-priority medications used in serious disease states. This required a solid clinical background of various disease states, knowledge about how to design low health literacy handouts, and effective group communication skills.

With the assistance of a small group of pharmacists, we created a Pharmacy Ambassador Program that allowed interns to serve as the face of the Department of Pharmacy on two pilot units for all newly admitted patients. Students introduced themselves to patients and

ensured that the patients knew that a pharmacist was available as a member of their health care team. We answered questions and referred any complex questions to the clinical pharmacists. This required us to use listening skills with patients and effectively transfer information from the patients to the pharmacists. Interns were also offered the opportunity to shadow clinical areas they were interested in. I explored areas that I had yet to cover in school, and areas in which I felt that my knowledge was lacking.

The Purdue College of Pharmacy has done an excellent job preparing students to be leaders in practice. Pharmacy students are trained to thrive in group settings and team-based health care situations through group projects and learning activities in a professional laboratory. This lab is a weekly course where pharmacy students apply their knowledge learned in the classroom to simulated, real-world situations. These experiences were important in teaching us how to adapt to new positions for the benefit of the group as a whole.

There were also areas I could have better prepared myself for prior to this internship, such as the administrative or business side. Prior to my internship, I did not understand basic business principles or the business side of pharmacy. The staff at Johns Hopkins assisted me in learning these areas of practice through projects and by answering my questions, all while handling their own job responsibilities. One example of where I struggled is the use of Microsoft Excel. We rarely use this in pharmacy school, so the internship challenged me to learn Excel in order to complete tasks and projects.

I learned many things from this experience, but one of the most important things is how critical it is to recruit top-notch employees within your department, and then retain your talent. Talent does not necessarily mean the person with the best résumé. Relationships matter, and are a key component in the team building process. Each person has unique talents, and should be placed in a role to capitalize on these strengths. This helps the individual achieve success, and ultimately benefits the department or organization as a whole.

Another notable thing I learned is the importance of time management. Most students think they have adequate time management skills, but after completion of this internship, I realized that this is an area where I can improve. I quickly learned the difference between balancing time as a student versus as a pharmacist in a full-time role. For example, I was given a list of projects

at the start of the summer with various due dates. I put off beginning the larger projects due to my difficulty adjusting to daily demands. My days were filled with meetings, presentations (see Figure 5), clinical staff projects and duties, department projects, and then of course my own personal projects. It wasn't uncommon for the workday to be over before working on any of my personal projects. Near the end of the internship, I found myself frantically rushing to finish things, and I worked late into the evenings and on weekends. This was a tremendous learning experience, and one that is helping me succeed in my third year of the professional program. I was able to apply my new time management skills to my new role as president of a pharmacy organization, while balancing the demanding workload of a pharmacy student.

Figure 5. Adam at The Johns Hopkins Hospital.

CONCLUSION

The summer internship program at The Johns Hopkins Hospital was a life-changing experience and has impacted my future career path. Prior to this internship, I had no experience in pharmacy administration, and had no idea what to expect. At the completion of the internship, I knew I had found the career path for me. I can combine my clinical knowledge and desire to impact patient care with my leadership skills and interest in innovation within the field of pharmacy.

The profession of pharmacy is devoted to lifelong learning and service. With new medications and treatment options continuously emerging, pharmacists must be lifelong learners. I plan to pursue a postgraduate residency training program in order to be a competitive candidate for hospital- and clinic-based practice positions. Pharmacy is a profession that involves caring, nurturing, and service to others—it is in my blood. In this profession, I can pair service with clinical knowledge and leadership skills. At Johns Hopkins, this was evident as I worked with a medically underserved population. Of course, service outside of the hospital is also important and something I continue to do.

Career exploration through summer internship programs is priceless and benefits any student. I was very nervous about this internship at first, but I left with better knowledge of my profession and an understanding of the Baltimore community—a city I could see myself living in some day.

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