Industry Role from a Pharmacy Student’s Perspective

The Rx and D Studentship program enables students to spend a summer completing rotations in various departments of a brand name company. This has given students the opportunity to develop an understanding of the role that pharmacists play in the industry setting.

Medical Information

As experts in providing drug information this department serves a primary entry point for a pharmacist into the world of pharmaceuticals. A pharmacist’s role in medical information includes: providing responses to patient and physician inquiries, providing sales support (via training sessions and sales aids), gathering adverse event data (i.e. post-marketing surveillance).

Government Affairs

Gaining formulary access for a drug is an important goal for an innovative pharmaceutical company. The pharmacist in this department is responsible for preparing drug submissions to the provincial governments in hopes of obtaining formulary listing.

Regulatory Affairs

Ensuring that a company’s product meets all legal and regulatory requirements set out by Health Canada is the primary duty of the pharmacist in regulatory affairs. Cross-functional alignment is key in order to ensure that everyone from the drug’s approval process and marketing proceeds without difficulty or delay.

Sales

Pharmacists excel in the sales field, as they possess a strong technical background and excellent people skills. Performing physician and specialist calls as well training new reps are common roles for pharmacists in sales. A branch role in this department is the medical liaison. Pharmacists excel in this function as it involves utilizing a greater degree of clinical knowledge to call on specialists and difficult physicians.

Marketing

In marketing, a pharmacist can reapply his/her clinical knowledge in a competitive manner in order to gain a product’s share in the marketplace.
No matter what role a pharmacist’s plays in industry, they are contributing the ultimate goal of improving patient outcomes. Furthermore it allows them to expand into areas outside the traditional community setting and provides an opportunity to develop new skills and competencies. In order to promote growth of the profession of pharmacy we must continue to take on roles, which allow us to evolve as healthcare professionals. Consequently this will enable society to recognize the importance of the skills and knowledge we have to offer.

**Hospital Practice from a Pharmacy Student’s Perspective**

The hospital environment is a great opportunity to learn for any pharmacy student. Duties range from the technical aspects of drug management and delivery, to the professional role of solving drug-related problems and caring for patients. It’s great being a student, because we gain respect from both sides, the technicians and the pharmacists! The day usually starts early at 7:30 am. The priority of the morning is to fill overnight orders, picked up that morning, and refill any night cupboard meds that were used the previous night. Once the morning round goes out, all are free to take their morning break and catch up about the news from the evening before (social time). A student usually finds them self taking on the role of the technician during the day, filling, delivering, picking up orders and restocking the ward stock for the floors they are responsible. On some days, the student is invited to accompany the pharmacists on the Grand Rounds, which is an educational presentation given by hospital residents or other staff. This is an empowering moment for a student, a chance to do what the ‘real’ pharmacists do. Other hospital opportunities available to students include the chance to organize a day conference for other pharmacy students, journal club meetings, and special lunchtime student lectures. There is also the chance for students to rotate in various areas of the hospital and experience pharmacy practice in such areas as acute care, extended care, cancer center, ambulatory care, drug information, drug manufacturing and pharmacy stores. The exposure that students get in the hospital setting is very motivational and fascinating. The environment is always restructuring and there is a changing role of the pharmacist towards a more clinical basis. Working in a hospital challenges students to adapt to innovative pharmacy practice and have some fun at the same time!

**Community Pharmacy from a Pharmacy Student’s Perspective**

In the year 2002, the role of the pharmacist in a community pharmacy is vast. The idea behind the concept of “count-pour, lick-stick, bag-tag” no longer applies. This older concept has since been replaced with the newer notion of pharmaceutical care.
As a pharmacy student working in a community pharmacy, my role is also vast. Although as a pharmacy student, my duties may include the concept of “count-pour, lick-stick, bag-tag”, they are certainly not limited to this. As a young mind, being prepared to enter the world of Health Care, I too am allowed to fine-tune my skills in the practice of pharmaceutical care.

Like I’ve already alluded to, a big responsibility of mine as a student is getting the prescriptions ready for the pharmacist to check. This involves receiving the prescription from the customer and making sure we already have a profile set up for them, and if not, then setting up such a profile complete with contact information as well as any known allergies. Following this, I would have to input the Rx into the computer, count the pills (or if need be – compound a preparation), and then put the medication in an appropriate container ready for the pharmacist. After the pharmacist has checked the Rx, and assuming I feel comfortable enough with my knowledge on the medication, I would then counsel the patient on its use and on any other details that I deem appropriate.

Another major responsibility of mine as a student is to dive into the world of OTC counseling. The front store of a community pharmacy holds a wide array of products, and more importantly, a wide array of customers – most of whom are vying for my attention because they are all looking for answers to what seems like their endless list of questions. Although at times, these never-ending questions seem a little overwhelming, at the end of the day, I’m always happy to have had the opportunity to help.

Aside from helping customers and filling prescriptions, my day as a pharmacy student is filled with many other countless responsibilities. Some of these include contacting physicians on behalf of patients for Rx renewals, or Rx clarifications; receiving and unpacking the daily drug orders; sending out the nightly drug orders; calling other pharmacies for prescription transfers (under the supervision of the pharmacist of course); and, cashing out customers at the cash register.

So as you can see, as a pharmacy student, I – along with the pharmacist – am in charge for “the responsible provision of drug therapy for the purpose of achieving definite outcomes which improve a patient’s quality of life”. In other words………..I’m responsible for providing pharmaceutical care.