

Accelerate your career as a resident

By Anne L. Burns



What do you plan to do after graduation? If you are a student in the early years of pharmacy school, what to do after graduation probably seems like a distant concern. But for a student nearing graduation, this is a frequent and sometimes pressure-packed question, as student pharmacists have more options today than ever before. In addition to traditional positions in community and hospital practice, graduates are working in areas such as managed care, consulting practice, telepharmacy, public health, and the pharmaceutical industry.

With so many options, how will you know what you need to do in order to secure the position you desire? The PharmD degree prepares you to seek licensure as a practicing pharmacist, but will it prepare you to obtain the position you are looking for after graduation? Most student pharmacists will enter the workforce in entry-level pharmacist positions. Some students will opt to enter graduate programs that lead to postgraduate degrees in the pharmaceutical sciences, business administration, public health, law, or medicine. And approximately one in seven students will choose to pursue a residency after graduation to gain the skills needed to secure the position they desire.

What is a residency?

A residency is a postgraduate education and training experience, generally 1 to 2 years long, designed to accelerate professional growth beyond entry-level competence. A resident works under the guidance of an experienced preceptor and focuses on developing advanced skills, knowledge, and abilities within a specific practice setting. Pharmacy residencies are like medical residencies in that the pharmacy resident is a licensed practitioner but continues to train under the supervision of one or more experienced practitioners. Like medical residencies, pharmacy residencies provide a stipend and structured learning experiences. Residency positions differ from staff pharmacist positions in that the resident is given the opportunity to participate in a variety of activities designed to enhance their skills in targeted areas. Staff pharmacists can develop similar skills, but it often takes longer because they need to meet core job responsibilities. For that reason, a residency is often equated with 3 to 5 years of pharmacy experience.

A residency usually starts on July 1 and ends on June 30 of the following year. For students desiring to enter a residency right after graduation, the July 1 start date gives them time to graduate and prepare to take the licensure exam. Residency programs expect a resident to obtain a pharmacy license early in the program, since working as an independent practitioner is a component of the program. If a student is going to an out-of-state

residency program, it will be important to research the licensure requirements in order to become licensed in that state. The benefit package for a resident usually consists of a stipend, health benefits, 2 weeks' paid vacation, and travel to at least one professional meeting. Some residency programs also include the opportunity to complete certificate training programs on topics such as immunizations, diabetes, and asthma. Residents in some programs are given the option to work outside of the residency for additional income, as long as the work does not interfere with the requirements of the residency. Upon successful completion, a resident receives a residency certificate from the program.

Benefits of a residency program

Why would you want to consider a residency program instead of taking a job after graduation? There are many benefits to participating in a residency program, including enhancing patient care and management skills, learning how to teach and precept students, participating in a project, developing leadership skills, and gaining better understanding global issues that affect the profession. Another important benefit is the significant advantage to be gained by working with some of the most innovative pharmacy practitioners and leaders in the country. These practitioners can often expose the resident to state-of-the-art practices they never thought were possible. Residents gain confidence, enhanced problem-solving abilities, and improved communication skills, and say the residency serves as an important stepping-stone in developing their professional career.

Another benefit to completing a residency is that it is recommended for many positions, and sometimes required—as in many clinical-focused jobs in the hospital setting, for example. Some institutions will also provide a salary differential for employees who have completed residencies. Residencies in the community pharmacy setting are newer than in the hospital setting, but even in this setting, ads for clinical coordinator positions are starting to indicate that completing a community pharmacy residency is desirable. In addition, for those individuals who would like to pursue a position at a college or school of pharmacy, completion of a residency is required or desired for most clinical faculty positions.

Types of residency programs

Most students coming right out of school will enter a pharmacy practice residency. This is a 1-year residency that concentrates on two core areas: direct patient care and practice management. In addition, all pharmacy practice residents must complete a project suitable for presentation. The activities you will be involved in during a pharmacy practice residency are at a higher level, and the expectations will be greater than those you experience as a student.

Traditionally, pharmacy practice residencies were conducted

in hospitals. Today, they also occur in community pharmacies, managed care settings, and clinic settings. Regardless of where they occur, however, direct patient care and practice management are still the core areas of focus for the residency. Through the residency, you will greatly expand your knowledge, skills, and abilities to practice in that setting, compared with the experience of having a few rotations in that setting during pharmacy school. Pharmacy practice residencies within a practice setting differ from one another in the level of emphasis on patient care and management, and also the types of patient care, management, and elective experiences. Some programs place a greater emphasis on leadership opportunities. Therefore, it is very important to learn as much as possible about each program you consider, and then compare the program's design to your areas of interest.

Two common settings—the health system and the community pharmacy—are detailed below. Former residents who have completed residencies in these and other settings describe their experiences in the following pages.

Pharmacy practice residencies in health systems are conducted in university-based teaching hospitals, community hospitals, and Veterans Administration (VA). Residency programs in this setting are usually set up in 4 to 6 week rotations. The resident spends time in required administrative and patient care rotations, with the option to select elective rotations. Residents in the hospital setting work with a variety of preceptors but have one



Bennett

New residency terminology on the horizon

The American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP) Commission on Credentialing is currently considering the implementation of new terminology related to residency training. It is important for student pharmacists to be aware of this terminology, as it may surface during discussions with representatives from residency programs. Under the new proposed terms, "PGY1" would be used to define the first year of postgraduate residency training regardless of setting, and "PGY2" would be

used to define a second year of postgraduate residency training. Completing a PGY1 residency would be a prerequisite for entering a PGY2 residency program. This has special significance because the first year of postgraduate residency training, regardless of the setting, would be considered a PGY1 residency. Individuals who pursue a second year of residency training would be considered PGY2 residents. So why is this new terminology important? The terminology is intended to better clarify the level of training received by the resident for the potential residents themselves, program representatives, employers, and other stakeholders.

PGY1 residency programs would follow the Pharmacy Practice Standards. These standards cover a broad scope of pharmaceutical services in direct patient care and practice management. The breadth of exposure is accomplished by rotating through block rotations, longitudinal rotations, staffing experiences, and special assignments. A strong foundation is laid to build a firm future practice, and for those residents who want to continue their training, a strong foundation is in place to pursue specialty training.

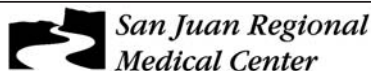
PGY2 residency programs would follow specialized residency standards. These standards cover a much narrower scope of pharmaceutical services in a focused area of pharmacy practice. The residency is intended to prepare pharmacists for specialty practice, as well as to be leaders in their practice area. The resident needs to have completed a PGY1 residency first to ensure well-grounded fundamentals in pharmacy practice. The full intent of the PGY2 standards cannot be met if solid foundation skills are not present. Residents may be recruited into a 2-year program that meets the intent of both standards over a 2-year period of time. Completing a PGY2 residency does not make one a specialist. It takes years of additional practical experience to become a recognized specialist.

Stay tuned for the latest developments in the evolution of residency training in the pharmacy profession.

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primary preceptor who oversees their experiences. Many of the patient care services in hospital residencies are already established so the resident has the opportunity to monitor many patients. Resident projects in this setting may focus on patient care services or examining issues related to quality improvement and pharmacy administration.

Community pharmacy residencies are conducted in chain, supermarket, independent, and outpatient pharmacies. These residencies are longitudinal, which means that patient care, management, and other activities are regularly scheduled over



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the year-long residency instead of being concentrated in one block of time. The resident spends the majority of his or her time at the primary practice site—the community pharmacy. Most community pharmacy residencies are affiliated with schools and colleges of pharmacy, although some are based in corporations. Residents often have elective rotations in ambulatory care clinics or physicians' office practices, and because of the affiliation with the university, the resident often has teaching responsibilities. Because the development of advanced patient care services is relatively new to the community pharmacy setting, residents in these programs gain valuable skills in developing patient care services, such as establishing a diabetes education service.

Also, specialized residencies provide training in a highly specialized area of pharmacy practice. Residents enter a specialty residency after completing a pharmacy practice residency. Some examples of specialized residencies include oncology, pediatrics, critical care, drug information, nuclear pharmacy, and primary care.

What is accreditation and why is it important?

Pharmacy residencies have the option to pursue accreditation through the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP) Commission on Credentialing. ASHP accredits pharmacy practice residencies and specialized residencies. Community pharmacy practice residencies are accredited by ASHP in partnership with APhA, and managed-care pharmacy practice residency programs are accredited by ASHP in partnership with the Academy of Managed Care Pharmacy. Accreditation is a quality seal of approval that confirms to students and others that the program has met a standard of practice and that the program is administered using a required training process. The accreditation process examines the patient care services provided by the program, the practice management experiences, and the structure of the training given the resident. Programs that seek accreditation do so voluntarily and must undergo an external peer-review process and ongoing quality improvement as part of the monitoring procedures.

Accreditation status is important to many students seeking a residency, as it provides added assurance that the program has met a quality standard. Some important terms to understand related to accreditation include:

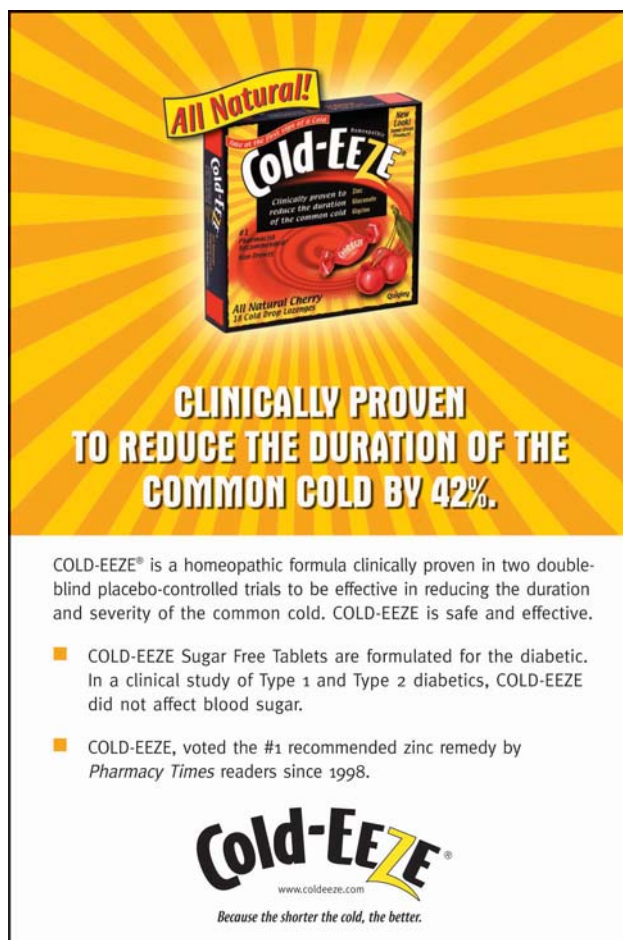
- Accredited: The program has met the requirements of the accreditation process and has received formal accreditation from ASHP.
- Provisional accreditation: The program has applied for accreditation and completed the on-site survey. The program has received a favorable report from the site survey team, and ASHP has granted conditional accreditation until ASHP grants it full accreditation.
- Application submitted: The program has applied to ASHP for accreditation and is in the process of preparing materials for an official on-site survey.

It is important for students looking for a residency program to ask about accreditation status. If a program is not accredited, it will be important to try to gather information about how the pro-

gram conducts residency training, how the program is structured, and whether it follows a set of goals and objectives. Janet Teeters, director of accreditation services for ASHP, gave the following advice for students: "As a future resident, you should be a savvy consumer; when interviewing with a program, ask if they are accredited or intend to be accredited. Programs that are willing to have peer review of their services and training program are strongly committed to residency training and ensuring you have a quality experience. After all, it's your future you are investing in—make sure it is a quality experience!"

This issue of *Pharmacy Student* will provide information to help you find a residency program that is right for you. Topics covered include guidance on available resources for learning about individual residency programs, steps for negotiating the residency recruitment process, insight from residency program directors and preceptors regarding what they look for in a resident, and perspectives from former residents on their residency experiences. Finding the right program takes research and dedication, but completing a residency can be a career-changing decision that leads to a satisfying professional career.

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