

## Primed for an industry career

By Mark Mayer, PharmD



Students interested in finding out firsthand what a career in the pharmaceutical industry would be like need look no further than postgraduate industry training programs. Similar to other postgraduate experiential opportunities, industry-based programs call for a 1- or 2-year commitment and seek highly motivated, enthusiastic candidates. Eli Lilly and Company's Visiting Scientist Program has introduced many participants to various facets of drug discovery and development. Lilly has offered students positions in the medical, marketing, and regulatory aspects of the pharmaceutical industry. Typically, each visiting scientist functions in one specific department while having continuous contact with individuals in different areas throughout the company. The primary goals of the program are professional growth and development, and helping individuals make informed decisions about a future career path.

During my year as a visiting scientist, I worked with a group called Medical Liaisons of the U.S. Medical Department. This functional area is charged with providing answers to inquiries from health care professionals, customers, and coworkers regarding the appropriate use of medications. Along with medical information, I learned about the particulars of the drug development process. This in-depth training included an overview of drug discovery, a summary of clinical trial design, and an introduction to the drug approval process. In conjunction with discussions with professionals working in each of these areas, I also visited various research facilities at Lilly

My responsibilities included developing and presenting a lecture on the topic of orphan drugs and writing a manuscript on the results of a clinical trial. My day-to-day activities varied throughout the program based on my evolving interests and the dynamic projects of my department. The flexibility intrinsic to the program allows a visiting scientist to explore personal areas of interest and spend time with various leaders throughout the company.

One of the most impressive aspects of the program is the diversity of experiences it offers. Not only did my responsibilities differ from those of other individuals in my department, but many of my projects were different. The emphasis on shared learning is an important strength of the program. By discussing our distinct roles and individual projects during weekly meetings, my colleagues and I were able to learn a great deal from each other.

In addition to an advanced understanding of the pharmaceutical industry, visiting scientists often cite several specific skills that were enhanced through completion of the program. These include leadership, teamwork, multitasking/time management, networking, and presentation delivery. Each visiting scientist works alongside an experienced employee who serves as a mentor. This greatly assists with integration into the company and program. My

experiences primed me for my current position as a diabetes care medical liaison and other potential positions in the pharmaceutical industry. The educational and experiential components of the Lilly program paved the way for my professional progression.

The Lilly Web site ([www.lilly.com/careers/campuszone/visiting\\_scientists/index.html](http://www.lilly.com/careers/campuszone/visiting_scientists/index.html)) contains the most up-to-date information about the Visiting Scientist Program. When the program is recruiting, screening interviews for prospective candidates are conducted at the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists Midyear Clinical Meeting.

Participation in a postgraduate program such as Lilly's does not guarantee employment upon completion. However, the transferable skills and unique experiences make certain that the candidate is highly sought after by potential employers. Pharmacists are equipped with the clinical expertise and product knowledge that are prerequisites for a rewarding career in the pharmaceutical industry.

*Mark Mayer, PharmD, is a diabetes care medical liaison at Eli Lilly and Co., in Alexandria, Va.*

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