

Specialty certifications await after graduation

By Jean Keating, PharmD

Have you ever seen initials after your professor's name and wondered what they stood for? I did. Until I did a rotation with the Board of Pharmaceutical Specialties (BPS) before graduation last year, I didn't know what many of those extra initials stood for either. I now know that BPS offers specialty certification in five areas of pharmacy: nuclear pharmacy (BCNP), nutrition support pharmacy (BCNSP), oncology pharmacy (BCOP), pharmacotherapy (BCPS), and psychiatric pharmacy (BCPP).

"Specialty certification is a great way to demonstrate to your patients, your colleagues, and even yourself that you possess a very high level of clinical knowledge and skill," said BPS Executive Director Richard J. Bertin, PhD. "This is a credential that is receiving increased recognition in the pharmacy profession."

BPS is the only organization that offers advanced specialty certification in specific areas of pharmacy. The Board was founded in 1976, and the first certification exam in nuclear pharmacy was offered in 1978. After nuclear pharmacy, the other specialty certifications emerged over time. As defined by BPS, nuclear pharmacy specialists seek to improve and promote the

public's health through the safe and effective use of radioactive drugs for diagnosis and therapy. Nutrition support specialists promote the maintenance and/or restoration of optimal nutritional status, designing and modifying treatment according to the needs of the patient. Oncology pharmacist specialists recommend, design, implement, monitor, and modify pharmacotherapeutic plans to optimize outcomes in patients with malignant diseases. Pharmacotherapy specialists are responsible for ensuring the safe, appropriate, and economical use of drugs in patient care and frequently serve as a primary source of drug information for other health care professionals. Psychiatric pharmacy specialists address the pharmaceutical care of patients with psychiatric disorders. If you would like more information regarding these specialties, visit BPS online at www.bpsweb.org.

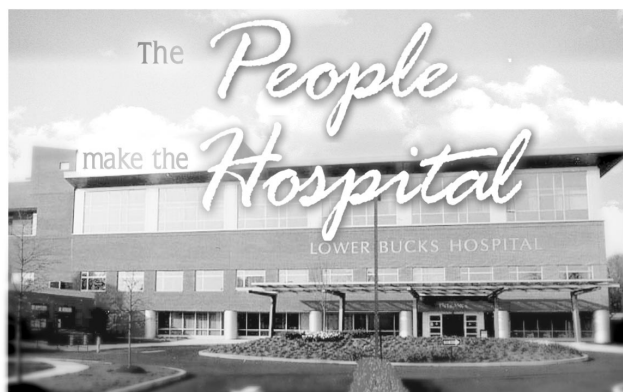
So many options

BPS certification is a high-level examination process meant for advanced practitioners, but there are other options for younger pharmacists to gain either broader knowledge or more specific knowledge of disease states and patient populations. After pharmacy school, new practitioners can complete residencies, specialty residencies, and fellowships. Disease management certifications are available for diabetes, asthma, hyperlipidemia, and anticoagulation. There are also certifications for working with particular patient populations, such as geriatrics. The American Society of Consultant Pharmacists created the Commission for Certification in Geriatric Pharmacy in 1997 to oversee a certification program in geriatric pharmacy practice. Its certified geriatric pharmacist credential indicates a pharmacist's knowledge in the specific area of geriatrics.

The National Institute for Standards in Pharmacist Credentialing (NISPC), founded in 1998, offers certification in the management of diabetes, asthma, dyslipidemia, and anticoagulation therapy. The NISPC disease-specific examinations serve as consistent and objective means of documenting the ability of pharmacists to provide disease state management services. This is especially important in community pharmacies, where pharmacists can provide much-needed services to patients. NISPC's credential for all four areas is the certified disease manager, or CDM.

This article should not make your head spin with the number of options you have after graduation. Not every pharmacist needs additional training in order to find a rewarding job. These are simply a few of the many options available to further your skills and education after you graduate.

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