

What is gained depends on what the resident puts into the program



Past APhA–ASP Member-at-large Susan H. Staggs, PharmD, has been quite busy since she graduated from the University of Tennessee College of Pharmacy in 2003. Staggs completed a pharmacy practice residency at the Methodist Healthcare–University Hospital in Memphis this past June and is currently completing a specialty residency in pediatrics at the Medical University of South Carolina in

Charleston. Staggs recently sat down for an interview with *Pharmacy Student* to provide her insights on the virtues of a pharmacy practice residency.

Pharmacy Student: How did you decide what type of residency to pursue?

Staggs: I chose to complete a pharmacy practice residency because I felt that it would provide the most variety of resident experiences in a hospital setting. When searching for a pharmacy practice residency, I thought that I might be interested in pediatrics; therefore, I chose to apply to programs that would allow me

to have experiences in pediatrics/neonatology. Then, while completing my pharmacy practice residency, I was able to participate in a variety of experiences that helped me make the decision to complete a specialty residency in pediatrics.

PS: What factors were most important in choosing your residency program?

Staggs: I searched for programs that would assist me in developing my clinical skills as well as my professional skills. Some of the factors I contemplated were program reputation, program intensity, location, on-call responsibilities, variety of rotations offered, number of elective rotations allowed, teaching opportunities available, reputation of the preceptors and past residents, number of positions available, staffing requirements, and support for professional meeting attendance.

PS: What was a typical week like in your residency program?

Staggs: As a pharmacy practice resident, there is no such thing as a typical week! Each rotation has different daily requirements. Clinical rotations consist of morning rounds with the health care team (attending, residents, and interns), afternoon rounds with the clinical pharmacist preceptor and, possibly, a student pharmacist the resident is precepting. Between rounds, residents have time to counsel patients on their medications, perform medication history verification, answer questions from the team, check on patients, and make recommendations regarding patient care. Administrative rotations consist of completing projects assigned by the preceptor, such as preparing a monograph to present to the health system's pharmacy and therapeutics committee, and completing a medication safety project and medication use evaluation.

PS: How did the residency prepare you for the position you have today?

Staggs: My pharmacy practice residency helped to prepare me for my specialty residency by giving me a stronger foundation of pharmacotherapeutic knowledge and improving my communication skills with regards to interacting with other health care providers. My residency also gave me the experiences in order to make an informed decision regarding which type of specialty residency to choose.

PS: What advice do you have for students considering a residency program?

Staggs: My take-home messages for student pharmacists are: One, if a student is thinking about doing a residency, they should do one. Two, no one can tell a student what they are looking for in a residency or what type of residency to choose. They have to decide for themselves. And three, once they choose to do a residency, the student should put their whole heart into it. Much of what can be gained from the residency is reflective of how much is put into it.

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