



UNIVERSITY POINT OF CONTACT NEWSLETTER

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Pharmacists Professional Advisory Committee (PharmPAC)
University Points of Contact (UPOC)

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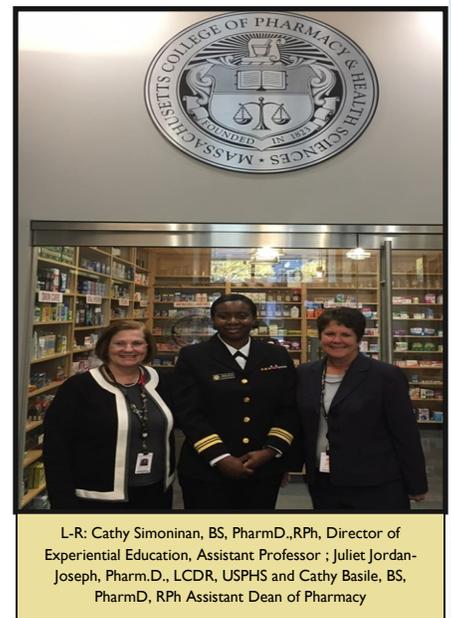
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When I was a pharmacy student at Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences (MCPHS) University, I had the vision of serving in one of the uniformed services, becoming a clinical pharmacist and a pharmacy preceptor. Upon graduation, in 2007, I worked in retail pharmacy briefly before joining the United States Public Health Service (USPHS) in June of 2008. I began my career as a clinical pharmacist at the Federal Bureau of Prisons, Federal Medical Center at Devens, MA.

Since then, I have been a preceptor to over 50 students from various pharmacy schools across New England. However, I am particularly proud to be a preceptor for my alma mater—MCPHS University, because of the many opportunities it has afforded me to showcase my career in the United States Public Health Service. Over the years, I have been featured in the alumni magazine, presented awards and participated in various panel discussions.

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L-R: Cathy Simoninan, BS, PharmD.,RPh, Director of Experiential Education, Assistant Professor ; Juliet Jordan-Joseph, Pharm.D., LCDR, USPHS and Cathy Basile, BS, PharmD, RPh Assistant Dean of Pharmacy

PGY2 Psychiatric Pharmacy Rotation at FMC Devens by LT Ofir Noah Nevo, PharmD, and LCDR Anna Santoro, PharmD

LT Nevo completed his PGY2 Psychiatric Pharmacy Residency in July, 2014, and was commissioned into the US Public Health Service Commissioned Corps in January, 2015. He is currently stationed with the FDA in Silver Spring, MD.

According to a special report published by the Department of Justice in 2006, 64% of local jail inmates, 56% of state prisoners, and 45% of federal prisoners have symptoms of mental illness. During my PGY2 Psychiatric Pharmacy Residency program at the Veteran Affairs Eastern Colorado Health Care System, I had the unique opportunity of completing a clinical rotation with the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP). It was an incredible learning experience that allowed me to gain insight into the mental health services BOP provides, expand my clinical mental health skills, and develop a greater appreciation for the intersections between mental health care and the criminal justice system.

The 4-week rotation was set up at FMC Devens in Devens, MA, under the supervision of LCDR Anna Santoro. FMC Devens is an administrative security federal medical center that houses over 1200 inmates.

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Continued from page 1... Service through Preceptorship

In the winter 2014 edition of the *Bulletin*, a magazine that highlights the accomplishments of MCPHS alumni, I was featured in uniform, while presenting the USPHS award to a graduating student at the MCPHS University hooding ceremony. The article focused on preceptors who emulate the spirit of servitude and value the importance of giving back.

Another notable event in which I was invited to participate was a panel discussion for the accreditation of the school of pharmacy's experiential education program. On October 15, 2015, MCPHS preceptors from different pharmacy settings, such as community, hospital, government and long-term care gathered over breakfast to provide feedback about the program to The Accreditation Council of Pharmacy Education (ACPE), which is the organization that accredits pharmacy programs in the United States. This was a particularly rewarding experience for me, because it allowed me to bolster the institution that laid the foundation for my career as a pharmacist. It also provided an opportunity for me to enlighten my colleagues about the USPHS, its benefits and its professional opportunities.

Reference: Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences University. (2014). Serving their alma mater. *The Bulletin*(Winter), 11.

Editor's Note:

Welcome to the Fall/Winter 2015 edition of the UPOC Newsletter! The UPOC newsletter has served as a gateway for pharmacy students to learn about the roles and activities of USPHS officers as well as for UPOC officers to share their recruitment activities. I work with a very talented group of officers who are striving to make this newsletter as relevant to pharmacy student issues as possible.

In this issue, we are proud to introduce a new series called Career Profiles. This feature follows pharmacists working in different operational divisions such as the IHS, FDA, and lesser known agencies like ASPR. In addition, we've kept the tried-and-true Q&As regarding COSTEPs and Residencies, as well as info regarding scholarships. After all, it's never too late to start thinking about future rotations or career opportunities. Keep this issue as a resource come rotation and residency time.

We hope you find this edition enjoyable and informative. As always, we welcome your comments and suggestions.

Yours sincerely,

LCDR Honeylit Cuelco, PharmD, BCPS, CPH, NCPS



Check us out:

<http://www.usphs.gov/corpslinks/pharmacy>



Continued from page 1... PGY2 Psychiatric Pharmacy Rotation at FMC Devens



The facility provides specialized long-term medical care and mental health care to inmates. There are over 150 inpatient psychiatric beds divided into three levels of mental health care: acute psychiatry (30 beds), step-down treatment (30 beds), and mental health rehabilitation/long-term care as well as more than 250 patients seen on an outpatient basis for mental health.

During the rotation, I provided patient care by participating in psychiatry rounds, supporting medical evaluations of psychiatric patients, completing psychopharmacology consults, and facilitating medication education groups. I worked alongside clinical pharmacists, psychiatrists, physician assistants, nurse practitioners and nurses. The interdisciplinary team was very welcoming, and encouraged my input.

In addition to patient care opportunities, I contributed to several different projects, such as updating the BOP National Treatment Guidelines for Schizophrenia, preparing drug monographs for the BOP Pharmacy and Therapeutics committee, and creating training material on treatment of gender dysphoria. All of the above projects had implications for the entire BOP, with the potential of impacting over 200,000 federal inmates nationwide.

My rotation with the BOP was challenging but extremely fulfilling. Confronting the realities of the US mental health care system, where a significant number of persons with mental illness are locked up in prison, is not easy. Yet my experience taught me that the BOP provides high quality mental health care to the inmates for which it is responsible. Subsequently, the care and education inmates receive has far-reaching implications on public health by ensuring that inmates are stable and healthy when released back to the community. I witnessed how BOP pharmacists are able to play a significant role in providing patient care, shaping policy, and promoting public health by increasing the standard of mental health care inmates receive. If you are a pharmacy student or resident interested in learning more about providing mental health care to a vulnerable and underserved population, I highly recommend completing a rotation with the BOP.

Student Opportunities: Networking and Learning about Non-Traditional Practice Areas

submitted by LT Garrette Martin-Yeboah

As an exhibitor at the American Society of Consultant Pharmacists (ASCP) Mid-Atlantic Regional Conference, I was able to share USPHS resources, discuss my career in pharmacy and the benefits of a career focused on public health initiatives. The American Society of Consultant Pharmacists is an international professional association that provides leadership, education, advocacy and resources to enable pharmacists to optimize medication management and health outcomes for older persons. Prior to joining the USPHS, I worked five years as a long-term care consultant pharmacist and became a Certified Geriatric Pharmacist. Due to my extensive experience with geriatric pharmacy, I currently serve as the PharmPAC liaison for ASCP.

Pharmacy students attended the conference to network, present posters and learn more about career opportunities. Many students were searching for opportunities to work in new environments and seek practice experiences in non-traditional pharmacy areas. With the Public Health Service, the possibilities for varied work experiences are endless. It was a great pleasure to speak with students from Maryland and Pennsylvania about the JRCOSTEP and SRCOSTEP programs as well as opportunities for IHS residencies offered with PHS. Students were given an "Answering the Call" brochure about career opportunities with PHS and were also provided with information about the FDA Pharmacy Student Experiential Program which allows fourth year students to complete a 4 to 6 week on-site FDA rotation.

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Students left the 3 day conference equipped with knowledge about new career options. They had the chance to learn from and interact with their peers as well as practicing pharmacists. One of the benefits of the UPOC program is having the ability work with students and answer questions about pharmacy practice. Giving back to the profession of pharmacy is a great privilege for me as PHS Commissioned Corps Officer.



LT Garrette Martin- Yeboah, UPOC for University of Maryland Eastern Shore, provided information about PHS, JRCOSTEP, and SRCOSTEP to pharmacy students at the ASCP Mid-Atlantic Conference in Gettysburg, PA on August 7, 2015.

Virtual Recruitment submitted by LT Kinbo Lee

On September 1, 2015, Commissioned Corps officers served as panelists on an hour-long conference call about student and career opportunities in the U.S. Public Health Service. Twelve pharmacy students from all three pharmacy schools in Maryland joined seven PHS officers from the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP), U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and Indian Health Service (IHS) to learn about the JRCOSTEP, SRCOSTEP, and IHS Pharmacy Residency programs. The conference call, organized by CAPT (ret.) James Bresette and a University of Maryland pharmacy student, provided an efficient way for current and prior COSTEPs and IHS Residents from across the country to connect with potential applicants and share invaluable insights and experiences.

The evening began with introductions by University of Maryland P4 student and moderator, Francis Nguyen, followed by an overview of the PHS mission, core values, deployments, and breadth of HHS and non-HHS opportunities by LT Eric Wong.

The next section covered the COSTEP and IHS Residency program structure and advice on becoming a standout applicant. Prior SRCOSTEPs LTs Rumany Penn, Katie Watson, and Eric Wong provided details about the application process such as the deadline, supplemental materials, boarding, and site interview. Students learned that the length of tour and level of commitment is the major difference between the SRCOSTEP and JRCOSTEP programs. LTs Sara Low and Morgan Greutman, prior and current IHS residents, respectively, clearly laid out not only information about the application process, but also details about the population served at their IHS sites. Students were directed to apply for rotations at agencies such as FDA and CDC and seek experiences that reflect the core values of the Corps.

Students were strongly encouraged to learn about the Corps and its culture. LT Katie Watson reinforced this sentiment with a reading from material acquired at the 2015 USPHS Scientific and Training Symposium. With regards to culture, Francis Nguyen shares that he “never understood why the term ‘camaraderie’ was frequently tied with the topic of USPHS until [he] took a step back and recalled each and every interaction [he] had with Commissioned Corps officers” who were “honest, receptive” and “sincerely wanted [him] to set [his] standards high.” April Tepfer, a P4 from Notre Dame of Maryland University, adds that “[she is] looking to have a career, not just a job after pharmacy school and the biggest pull to [her] to the USPHS is that it’s not only a career, but it’s also a family, a place to belong.” These two hit on a theme PHS

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My Experience Participating at the Wilkes University Internship and Career Fair

Submitted by LT Yvon Yeo

Earlier this year, I applied and was selected to be the University Point of Contact (UPOC) for Wilkes University Nesbitt School of Pharmacy.

As the UPOC, I am to maintain a minimum of two annual contacts with the pharmacy school. Last week, I attended the annual Wilkes University Internship and Career Fair as a BOP/PHS recruiter. It was a well-attended event - there were approximately 50 employers and over 250 students at the career fair. With so many recruiters vying for the students' attention, I have to say that wearing the Service Dress Blue (SDB) uniform did help to draw the crowd to my booth. I took the opportunity to tell the students about PHS officers being deployed to Liberia during the Ebola crisis as that was an event which brought the Commissioned Corps much visibility.

Prior to the career fair day, I contacted the PharmPAC recruitment team for a PHS tablecloth or banner, giveaway items, pamphlets and brochures. However, due to budget constraints, there were no PHS recruitment materials for loan. Instead, I purchased a blue and yellow (PHS colors) tablecloth and table skirt from Party City and printed out

color images of the PHS insignia to deck out my booth. As for the recruitment handouts, I printed out from the www.usphs.gov website the "Best Kept Secrets" for each of the PHS categories, "7 Steps to Become a Commissioned Corps Officer," and information about the SRCOSTEP and JRCOSTEP.

Some of the more frequently asked questions were:

What is the U.S. Public Health Service (PHS)?

What locations and agencies do PHS officers work at?

What job vacancies are available?

Does PHS hire interns?

What is the difference in benefits between Public Health Service and Civil Service?

Having a laptop is very helpful to show the students how to navigate the www.usphs.gov website which answers many of the questions regarding duty locations and agencies where Commissioned Corps officers serve, links to usajobs.gov and federal job vacancy listings, and information on SRCOSTEP and JRCOSTEP.

As for the difference between Public Health Service and Civil Service, I talked about the differences in annual leave, sick leave, pay scale, health care, retirement, moving expenses, recruitment and retention bonuses, and (last but not least) the camaraderie and pride that comes with

servicing in uniform!

Some tips for a successful recruiting day:

Arrive early- parking is usually tight on campus.

Request for a temporary parking pass from Career Services or you may risk getting a ticket.

Print out a campus map to navigate your way to the career fair building.



Bring a travel case to transport your recruitment materials across campus. That way, you wouldn't dirty or wrinkle your uniform lugging totes on your person - a Tide-To-Go Instant Stain Remover Pen is handy too.

Print business cards with your email address and phone number for contacts - business cards could be made at Staples.

Bring a laptop to show the students how to navigate the government websites - www.usphs.gov and www.usajobs.gov (Career Services will be able to provide the campus wifi password.)

Last but not least, don't forget to log your recruitment activity in the PharmPAC Activity Report Form at <https://sites.google.com/a/phspharmacist.org/pharmpac-tools/current-officers/upoc-activity-report>.

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officers would readily recognize as *esprit de corps*.

Pharmacy students and PHS officers alike left the conference call satisfied.

Students learned about PHS opportunities and had all of their questions answered, while PHS officers enjoyed a night of recruitment, fellowship, and networking. LT Sara Low expressed this sentiment best: "I remember how helpful PHS officers were to me as a student, so I was happy for the opportunity to pay it forward. In addition, I really enjoyed catching up with members of the Maryland Mafia [PHS officers who graduated from the University of Maryland] and seeing how their PHS careers have progressed."



Students from all three schools of pharmacy in the State of Maryland participated in the conference call.

Recruitment: Roseman University College of Pharmacy Career Fair submitted by LT Scott Myers and LCDR Lynette Wasson

LT Scott Myers had attended the Roseman University College of Pharmacy Career Fair on Friday November 6th, 2015, in Henderson, Nevada. LT Myers had shared his experience with students regarding opportunities offered by the U.S. Public Health Service. He had also shared information about working at Peach Springs Health Clinic, which serves the Hualapai and Havasupai Tribes in Northwestern Arizona.



LT Myers presenting an award

Upon arriving at the Roseman University College of Pharmacy Career Fair, I was kindly greeted by the Director of Admissions and Student Affairs, who was eagerly awaiting my arrival. She was very excited that I had come to represent the US Public Health Service, and cheerfully stated that she received emails from two different students asking if I was going to be attending the career fair. The students were very excited and interested to learn more about a career as a PHS officer, and wanted to speak to me further about my experience. I made a previous visit to the Roseman College of Pharmacy in April to present the US Public Health Service Excellence In Public Health Pharmacy Practice Award to one of their classmates. Several students at the career fair stopped by my booth to say hello, and to tell me that they remembered me presenting the award back in April.

It was a slow start at the career fair, however, that soon changed. One student in particular was very interested in what the PHS is and the process of becoming a Commissioned Officer. She also inquired about the pay in comparison to private sector jobs, and also the benefits. We

spoke for about half an hour about all the various opportunities, and she was especially interested in the IHS Loan Repayment Program. After the student left my table, I noticed that she had been urging some of her classmates towards my table so they could in turn ask me questions. She was enthusiastic about everything she learned about the PHS, and relayed that excitement to all her classmates as well. It was enjoyable to see.

I stayed an additional ½ hour or so at the career fair booth, due to the amount of students who were gathered at my booth, waiting for me to answer their questions. I had a great experience with the students at the career fair, and I look forward to representing the USPHS again at next year's event.



CAREER PROFILE: An Interview with LCDR Pham T. LONG of

ASPR submitted by CDR Jerry Zee



LCDR Long Pham is currently serving as a Program Manager in the Division of Logistics for the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR). He works with military installations on Inter-Agency Agreements throughout the nation and overseas to enhance national preparedness to support natural disaster and emergency response efforts. He will be going into a new position in August 2015 as ASPR Pharmacist, overseeing pharmaceutical caches in the (8) largest facilities in the United States and U.S. territories. He began his Corps career at an isolated hardship site with the Indian Health Service (IHS) in Chinle, AZ, and served as a clinical pharmacist and pharmacy informaticist working at various settings from outpatient pharmacy, inpatient pharmacy, and pharmacy-operated clinics. He is currently also serving as the Special Assistant to Rear Admiral Pamela Schweitzer, Chief Pharmacy Officer (CPO).

1. Why did you choose Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR) compared to many other agencies?

There were numerous ASPR vacancies listed on USA-jobs.com when I was at Indian Health Service and since I was not familiar with ASPR, I did some research on it. I found out the ASPR positions require you to be available 24/7, respond to national emergencies and public health issues. The positions seemed interesting and challenging. Dealing with issues at a national level, I saw these potentially difficult positions as an opportunity to excel as a PHS officer.

2. In your own words, what does ASPR do and what are your responsibilities within ASPR?

ASPR is in charge of providing medical response in the event of natural or man-made disasters and national special security events. My main responsibility is developing inter-agency agreements— which is similar to writing contracts—worth several million dollars with other Federal agencies (e.g. FEMA), private sectors (e.g. UPS) and the Department of Defense. These agreements allow ASPR to store pharmaceutical and medical caches at their facilities in case an emergency occurs in those regions. I also go to the facilities to inspect the site to make sure it has an appropriate environment to store the caches. I recently just got back from Puerto Rico to do a site visit at FEMA.

3. How long were you with Indian Health Service (IHS) and what did you enjoy about your time with IHS.

I joined IHS in 2011 with my wife, LCDR Eithu Lwin. Yes, we are a PHS family! We served at Chinle IHS for almost 3 years. I enjoyed helping to open new pharmacy-operated clinics and being able to rotate work at different settings such as outpatient and inpatient pharmacy. By living and working at an isolated hardship location, it gave me a sense of accomplishment that I helped to improve the public health of an underserved population. I enjoyed interacting with the local Native American communities at various cultural activities after work and on weekends. My favorite memories are of my wife and I going to a Navajo colleague's house to ride their horses and watch how they rope the bull, and hiking the Canyon de Chelly and Havasupai Falls.

4. Looking back, what advice would you give to student pharmacists who are in their last year or the last 2 years of their pharmacy education. Would you recommend them to start out their Public Health Service (PHS) career in IHS or ASPR, why?

My advice is go to IHS and work as Junior or Senior COSTEP. They will have an adventure of a lifetime and they will fulfill an important mission of the PHS by serving the underserved. There are numerous opportunities for students such as helping to open clinics or start new programs, which will make a tremendous impact on the reservation. When I talk to the ASPR PHS officers about my IHS experiences, they wish they had the chance to have a similar experience.

I would recommend starting a PHS career with the IHS because:

- They will make you think outside of the box with limited resources available and help you to become a good PHS leader
- IHS Loan Repayment and 10-year public health service loan forgiveness
- Outdoor activities every weekend to sustain a healthy lifestyle

5. What has been the highlight of your career thus far within USPHS?

The highlight of my career was being selected as the Special Assistant to Rear Admiral Pamela Schweitzer. I have learned so much from RADM Schweitzer that it has helped shape me as a leader in ASPR. In addition, through RADM Schweitzer, I have had the privilege of working with so many wonderful, dedicated PHS officers as I coordinate national projects and events.

6. Are there summer internship opportunities within ASPR? Are there opportunities for students who wish to do a rotation with ASPR in their last year of education?

Currently, there are no pharmacy internship opportunities at ASPR but I plan to work on an agreement with ASPR Human Resource to have pharmacy students do a rotation at ASPR during their last year. It will be wonderful to have the students help out with the Drugs Quality & Assurance program at ASPR facilities and possibly have students deploy to national special security events (e.g. July 4th) so that they will experience behind the scenes planning and coordinating.

7. What prompted you to volunteer to be the Special Assistant for Rear Admiral Pamela Schweitzer, the Chief Pharmacy Officer (CPO) in 2014, and what can you share about your experience thus far in working with the CPO as well as your duties and responsibilities?

I met RADM Pamela Schweitzer at the IHS Regional Southwest Meeting in 2014. Even long before I met her, I had heard of the many wonderful innovations that she had contributed to IHS. I admired her leadership when she spoke at the event and when I saw the posting for Special Assistant, I applied immediately.

It has been a truly amazing experience to work with RADM Schweitzer. There is not a time that I don't have fun. All the work I have been doing is very exciting and I can see that she has planted the seeds to advance the pharmacy profession and the Corps and the seeds are growing.

The duties and responsibilities of a special assistant for the CPO are mainly coordinating with federal and private sector personnel, being Aide-de-Camp as well as training other new Aides-de-Camps, helping to design certificates and awards and being involved with other pharmacy or PHS projects.



CAREER PROFILE: Profile/Interview of an IHS Pharmacist who recently obtained the BCOP submitted by CDR Renee Taylor



In the field of oncology, pharmacists with the Board Certified Oncology Pharmacist (BCOP) certification are excellent resources for cancer patients who are undergoing chemotherapy. These pharmacists are capable of mitigating the risk associated with infusion related complications, promptly recognizing dosing issues, and evaluating appropriate antiemetic regimens. They are also able to closely monitor patients throughout the expected duration of treatment to assess patients' neutrophil nadir and provide expertise on the need for boosting agents such as Human Granulocyte Colony-stimulating Factor as appropriate.

CDR Anne Marie Bott is a pharmacist with the Indian Health Service who recently became BCOP certified. CDR Bott has 10 years of pharmacy experience and practices at the Alaska Native Medical Center (ANMC) in Anchorage, Alaska. ANMC is a 150-bed tertiary care referral hospital for the entire state's Alaska Native and American Indian people. ANMC has an Oncology Department with 3 full time oncologists and a 10 chair infusion center with a planned expansion to 18 chairs in 2016. The infusion center serves oncology and internal medicine patients. The oncology pharmacy service cares for the entire infusion center patient population as well as for hospitalized patients requiring chemotherapy.

Interviewer: What are some of the unique challenges with working at this site?

CDR Bott:

Alaska presents unique challenges of health care delivery due to extreme weather, almost half the state's population not living on the road system, and the need for patients to travel great distances to receive health care.

Interviewer: What motivated you to obtain the board of pharmaceutical specialty certification in oncology?

CDR Bott: As the lead IHS Alaska Area oncology pharmacist, my duties range from developing chemotherapy order sets, writing and presenting medication monographs to the Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committee, ensuring appropriate compounding standards, to being an oncology pharmacy resource throughout the state. I continuously strive to enhance my knowledge, teach others, and improve workflow. In addition, our facility is treating patients requiring very complex, high intensity chemotherapy as well as intrathecal chemotherapy. Expanding these services allow for more oncology services to be delivered close to patients' homes, which is extremely important to the Alaska Native people. Being board certified solidifies my knowledge and skill set to further expand oncology pharmacy programs throughout IHS.

Interviewer: What new skills were you hoping to gain once you received your BCOP certification?

CDR Bott: The new skills I have gained will be vital in helping treat our oncology patients, especially because our facility has expanded treatment to pre- and post-bone marrow transplant patients.

Interviewer: Did you complete a residency

or fellowship program?

CDR Bott: I completed a PGY1 residency program with the Indian Health Service.

Interviewer: Are you interested in obtaining any additional pharmacy certifications?

CDR Bott: I plan to develop a National Clinical Pharmacy Specialist (NCPS) certified pharmacist antiemetic prescribing protocol for patients receiving chemotherapy and becoming an NCPS certified pharmacist in this specialty area.

Interviewer: I see that you also have the BCPS or pharmacotherapy certification. Do you think that it helped you to prepare for the BCOP exam?

CDR Bott: Absolutely! Having BCPS gave me the confidence and background knowledgebase for the types of questions boards generally ask, especially in the statistics area.

Interviewer: What are some of your professional goals and how will the BCOP help you to reach those goals?

CDR Bott: My oncology short term goals include the recent development and further expansion of the oncology pharmacy student program and developing a National Clinical Pharmacy Specialist (NCPS) pharmacist antiemetic prescribing protocol for patients receiving chemotherapy. Longer term goals include providing clinical and technical expertise for an infusion center pharmacy relocation and expansion and regional infusion center development for Alaska Tribal Health System partners, developing a PGY2 Oncology Residency program and being a pharmacist resource for conducting oncology clinical trials.

CAREER PROFILE: A Unique Career Option: United States Public Health Service (USPHS) Pharmacist at FDA submitted by LCDR Stephanie Begansky



If you had told me 8 years ago that my career as a pharmacist would involve riding in helicopters, traveling to remote villages in El Salvador and Nicaragua, watching bald eagles soar overhead as I worked as a fill-in pharmacist in a small town in Alaska, and assisting with Hurricane Sandy response in Brooklyn, I would have said that you were crazy! After all it had been my experience that most pharmacists enter prescriptions, call insurance companies, dispense medications, counsel patients and assist with OTC product selection.

I vividly remember entering my last year of pharmacy school and wondering what I might end up doing with my pharmacy career. When I began pharmacy school, I thought that retail pharmacy was how I would spend my career as a pharmacist. I had worked in retail pharmacy since the age of 15, first as a cashier, and then a technician and intern. As I progressed through school, I became less convinced that retail pharmacy was what I wanted to do. I researched other areas of pharmacy practice and participated in a few summer internships in hospital and industry settings, but as I began my first rotation I was

still feeling a little lost as to what I might do upon graduation.

As I stepped foot into my first day of rotation at the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) little did I know that my dream career was soon to be revealed. I remember being nervous, walking through the metal detectors and placing my bag on the x-ray machine but shortly thereafter, I found a welcoming environment with many friendly faces. I couldn't figure it out; I had never seen so many happy pharmacists in one location. I was intrigued. I also saw, for the first time, pharmacists wearing uniforms of the United States Public Health Service (USPHS) Commissioned Corps. By the end of my first week of rotation at the FDA I knew that a career in the USPHS was perfect for me and I started the application process immediately. After graduation, I was lucky enough to begin my dream career as a USPHS pharmacist stationed at the FDA.

Perhaps you are wondering what characteristics of the USPHS made me decide so quickly that this was the perfect career path for me. As I explored this unique career there were a few things that immediately caught my attention; specifically, the ability to deploy on a humanitarian mission or to a public health emergency, the unique duty stations and ability to switch duty stations throughout your career, and an outstanding work/life balance that I had not seen elsewhere. The duty stations are plentiful and each has the ability to provide a rewarding experience just as my first seven years as a USPHS pharmacist at the FDA have provided me.

While my day to day work may not currently involve direct patient care, I keep my clinical practice up to date with a part time job in a retail pharmacy. I also have participated in a few amazing deployments. In 2009, I joined

the equal partnership humanitarian mission called Continuing Promise on the US Naval Ship Comfort and dispensed medications and counseled thousands of patients in El Salvador and Nicaragua. In 2012, I deployed to an Indian Health Service clinic in Juneau, Alaska and assisted an understaffed ambulatory clinic. Shortly thereafter, I was again deployed to assist with the Hurricane Sandy response in Brooklyn, NY, serving as a night shift pharmacist at a medical center for displaced nursing home patients.

Thus far, my career as a USPHS pharmacist has been nothing short of amazing. If I had not branched out to explore a variety of career options during my rotation experience, I am afraid that I would not have found out about USPHS pharmacy. I currently precept students and encourage them, as I would encourage each of you, to step out of your comfort zone and find not just a job, but a career that you find exhilarating. In my opinion, the most amazing thing about the pharmacy school experience is the ability to explore all of the seemingly endless options that you have upon graduation. Maybe, just maybe, your dream job is one rotation away!

ATTENTION!

All JRCOSTEPs applying for an IHS Extern Position must also apply to this [USAJOBS announcement](#). The Summer 2016 Extern announcement has been posted to USAJOBS beginning December 1st, 2015 and closing January 15th, 2016.

Student Affairs

LCDR Brian Parker Scholarship submitted by LCDR Finocchio



LCDR Rodney Waite and Ms. Stephanie Burke

This fall, the North Carolina Commissioned Officers' Association (NCCOA) named the first recipient of the Lcdr Brian Parker Community Service Scholarship. Ms. Stephanie Burke from the University of Michigan College of Pharmacy was selected out of almost 50 applicants. Her application demonstrated exceptional dedication to her community and embodied the USPHS core value of Service. It was evident that she thoroughly enjoyed the time she spent helping others and this enthusiasm reminded the Scholarship Committee of the fun Lcdr Brian Parker exuded while volunteering within his community. On October 21, 2015, Ms. Stephanie Burke was awarded with a plaque and a check for \$1,000 by LCDR Rodney Waite on behalf of NCCOA for her excellence in serving her community.

The Lcdr Brian Parker Community Service Scholarship is sponsored by the NCCOA and will be given out yearly to a pharmacy student that demonstrates his or her impact on the community and what was learned through this service. For more information regarding the scholarship, please contact Jaclyn.Finocchio@gmail.com.

Rho Chi Boblitt Lecture submitted by CDR Deegala

Sponsored by The Rho Chi Society University of Houston Beta Omicron Chapter and UH College of Pharmacy, the Robert L. Boblitt Lecture Series is held in the fall of

each academic year. During the lecture, UH Rho Chi members present the chapter's Teaching Excellence Award to the outstanding faculty members from the college's three academic departments.



CDR Deegala appearing with the 2015 Rho Chi Society UH Beta Omicron Chapter inductees



CDR Deegala delivering the Lecture "Advanced Pharmacy Practice in the U.S. Public Health Service."

Touro College of Pharmacy Student Colleen Kim Receives Prestigious 2015 "Excellence in Public Health Pharmacy Practice Award" from U.S. Public Health Service

submitted by CDR Liatte Krueger with permission from the Touro College of Pharmacy Media Department



L-R: CDR Krueger with Dr. Kim

Six years ago, Colleen Kim was employed as a software engineer in San Diego, putting her degree in aerospace engineering to work. Engaged to be married and working for one of the leading manufacturers of mobile communications, life was good.

But the UCSD grad wanted to keep learning, and so in the evenings she continued to take classes in a range of subjects, including biology, a subject she found fun for the first time in her life. She wanted to know more about healthcare, and when a friend achieved a long-coveted goal of a slot in pharmacy school, she became curious and began to explore the pharmacy profession.

She was awarded the prestigious "Excellence in Public Health Service Award" from the United States Public Health Service for her commitment to public health, leadership, education and community outreach on HIV and AIDS awareness, as well as prescription drug abuse. The award was presented in recognition of her four years of service in the public health arena while studying at TCOP for her doctorate degree granted at commencement ceremonies May 27. The USPHS award was presented at a banquet on the eve of commencement by Liatte Krueger, Pharm.D., USPHS. "This annual award recognizes a student who has demonstrated a commitment to public health through pharmacy practice," said Dr. Krueger, adding Kim "has displayed commitment to public health and community participation."

Dr. Krueger cited a long list of Kim's activities including chairing the Student National Pharmaceutical Associations' 'Remember the Ribbon' HIV/AIDS Committee, and earning recognition for Touro with its participation in the largest number of HIV/AIDS events among the 23 pharmacy schools in the northeast that make up Region I and for having the greatest number of students and Walgreens pharmacies participate in HIV/AIDS community events among all pharmacy schools in the U.S.

Excerpt from: <https://www.touro.edu/news/press-releases/tcop-student-wins-usphs-public-health-award.php>

Welcome 2015 Bureau of Prisons SrCOSTEPS! submitted by LCDR Anna Santoro and LT Karla Valles

Each year the United States Public Health Service selects students in the health care professions to become Commissioned Corps Officers through the Senior Commissioned Officer Student Training and Extern Program (SRCOSTEP). This is a highly competitive program that provides the pay and benefits of active duty officers by the Sponsoring Agency. In 2014, four pharmacy officers were selected and sponsored by the Federal Bureau of Prisons for the SRCOSTEP Program. They have all recently graduated from their respective pharmacy schools and are beginning the transition to their newly assigned institutions. Please join us in welcoming the newly commissioned Pharmacy officers!

LT Trey Draude



LT Trey Draude is a recently commissioned officer with the Bureau of Prisons at FCC Petersburg. LT Draude graduated from the University of Pittsburgh in April of 2015. He became passionate for the USPHS during pharmacy school after meeting several officers at a career roundtable event. LT Draude first received a JrCOSTEP position in the Office of the Surgeon General under the Division of the Civilian Volunteer Medical Reserve Corps (DCVMRC) where he completed a capstone project coordinating an internship program for high school/college aged students from Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA) Future Health Professionals. This JrCOSTEP experience helped to develop his passion for providing care for the underserved. LT Draude recently graduated from OBC and received the Distinguished Graduate Award. LT Draude states: "I'm excited to establish a great foundation as an officer with the BOP and am interested in expanding my role clinically in any capacity the BOP may need, but have special interests in psychotropic medications as well as HIV and HCV treatment management. I believe

we have a great opportunity in the BOP to serve a truly underserved population and I am proud to be a part of the team that provides care for our patients."

LT Davis Hanai



LT Davis Hanai graduated from the University of Hawai'i at Hilo the Daniel K. Inouye College of Pharmacy. Before attending pharmacy school, he worked as a psychiatric nurse for three and a half years. He is interested in acute

care, infectious disease, and mental health. As a SRCOSTEP participant, he will be stationed at FMC Carswell in Fort Worth, TX and is excited to begin his career as a pharmacist. LT Hanai's goal is to someday join a rapid response team and deploy during national emergencies. In his free time he enjoys spending time with his wife and 1 year old daughter, outdoor activities, and searching for tasty food to eat.

LT Leanna Slarsky



LT Leanna Slarsky graduated this past May from MCPHS University in Worcester, MA. Before starting pharmacy school, she studied nutrition and dietetics at Simmons College in Boston. LT Slarsky first learned about USPHS during her first year of pharmacy school when LCDR Anna Santoro came to her school to give a presentation about her work as a Commissioned Corps officer and her work with the BOP. She completed her final year of pharmacy school as an ensign in the SRCOSTEP program with the Bureau of Prisons as her sponsoring agency, knowing for some time that she would work at a BOP site. LT Slarsky feels fortunate that

during her last year of school she had the opportunity to do a longitudinal rotation, completing three advanced rotations at FMC Devens, where she was not only able to learn how to be a pharmacist, but also learned how to be a USPHS officer. She is excited to begin her career with USPHS at a BOP medical center, like FMC Devens, so that she will have abundant opportunities to work in clinical settings while beginning her career as a pharmacist.

LT Kinbo Lee



LT Kinbo Lee is currently assigned to his first duty station at FCC Tucson as a staff pharmacist and hopes to increase his clinical expertise and work within a collaborative atmosphere with

fellow pharmacists and other health providers to advance the mission of the USPHS and the BOP. LT Lee received his Bachelor's degree in biochemistry from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), a Master of Health Sciences (MHS) in general epidemiology and methodology from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health (JHSPH), and his Doctor of Pharmacy at the University of Maryland School of Pharmacy (UMB). While at UMB, he was an Albert Schweitzer Fellow and designed and implemented a program in collaboration with a previous employer and national non-profit, the Green and Healthy Homes Initiative to offer lifestyle and diet counseling, smoking cessation assistance, and promotion of medication adherence a low-income, underserved population in Baltimore City. For his efforts, he was honored in receiving the USPHS Excellence in Public Health Pharmacy Practice Award. LT Lee first became aware of PHS at a career fair at JHSPH where he met a couple of EIS officers. Through interactions with officers in the UPOC program, he became intrigued and inspired by officers because they exhibited a life dedicated to upholding positive core values which he considered rare and thus, highly valued and worth pursuing. He is very excited to start his career in the BOP, a challenging environment no doubt, but one that he finds necessary for personal and professional growth.

An unforgettable summer with IHS

submitted by Shannon Haar, PharmD Candidate and LT Jeannie Hong, PharmD



The author in front of Parker Indian Health Center

During the summer of 2015, I was the Pharmacy JrCOSTEP for 7 weeks at Parker Indian Health Center in Parker, Arizona. This time last year, I would have never imagined that such a small town located across the country would provide me with challenging professional developments, first-hand insight into the Indian Health Service (IHS) and the U.S. Public Health Service, and an in-depth look at a culture so different from my own.

I would not trade my time in Parker for anything. The

entire experience set forth my career as a future pharmacist because I believe the JrCOSTEP exposed me to real world education that put me ahead of my classmates going into our second year of pharmacy school. From learning the day-to-day operations of the pharmacy to anticoagulation appointments to seeing patients with severe foot infections to giving a presentation on pneumococcal vaccines, each activity went above and beyond what I had learned in school over the past year. Everything my preceptor assigned me was challenging, but ultimately pushed me to become a better student pharmacist.

One of the most memorable opportunities was delivering medications by helicopter to the Havasupai clinic at the bottom of the Grand Canyon. The Havasupai people have their own distinct culture and the falls were one of the most beautiful sights I have ever seen. I can say with confidence that my experiences with the IHS were very unique from what is typically imagined of a pharmacy internship.

It is difficult to put into words everything that I learned in Parker, but the people I met and the places I traveled come with memories and education that will last a lifetime.

I cannot think of a better way to spend a summer. If advancing your education, traveling, and learning about American Indian culture appeals to you, then consider applying for a JrCOSTEP with the Indian Health Service. I can promise you will not regret it, I know I definitely don't.



Found a waterfall while hiking to the bottom of the Grand Canyon



JRCOSTEP experience at Phoenix Indian

Medical Center submitted by Michelle Lin, PharmD Candidate and CDR Jing Li

My time as a student intern with the Public Health Service was truly rewarding. In the summer of 2015, I was selected as a JRCOSTEP with the Indian Health Service (IHS) at Phoenix Indian Medical Center (PIMC). The IHS opened my eyes to the clinical knowledge and leadership expected of pharmacists in a healthcare team. While I did spend a good deal of time practicing patient counseling at the outpatient, inpatient, and specialty pharmacy, I was also able to see the workings of other departments at PIMC and shadow at specialty clinics.

One of the many great experiences I had during my externship was shadowing with the wound care nursing team and seeing the treatments used for cleaning and healing wounds. Although the days I spent shadowing with the wound care team were not directly related to working in the pharmacy, I saw how each member of the healthcare team interacted with the patients until the patients were served at the pharmacy. That experience helped me see how the act of dispensing a medication is not done in a vacuum. There are many opportunities for healthcare professionals to positively impact the lives of patients, and the pharmacist plays an important role in patient care, as do other members of the healthcare team.

The respect pharmacists in the IHS garnered for their dedication to patient care and the depth of their clinical knowledge really impressed me. One of the PIMC pharmacists at a clinic for HIV patients manages very complicated medication regimens for patients at risk for many different complications. I saw how patients in these difficult situations were confident in the care the pharmacist was providing them, and I aspire to achieve that same level of respect and trust with patients in the future.

Overall, learning beside the talented and professional pharmacists at PIMC was a great and memorable opportunity. The externship challenged my notions of the limits of pharmacy and allowed me to grow in my professional development. While my time was spent with the IHS, I believe the other branches of the Public Health Service will provide a unique experience for any pharmacy student. Those at all interested in providing care to underserved populations and practicing in a setting where they will be encouraged to continuously enhance their knowledge can only benefit from the JRCOSTEP experience, as I did.



Fall/Winter 2015

Catawba Service Unit IHS

JRCOSTEP submitted by ENS Kylie Pooler, PharmD
Candidate and CDR Misti Houck



L-R: ENS Kylie Pooler, LT Matthew David, CDR Misti Houck, CAPT Kenny Patterson, LT Cynthia Chennault at the 2015 COF Symposium

I stepped into the hotel elevator in Atlanta, Georgia ready to take on my first few days as a JRCOSTEP with the United States Public Health Service. I stepped out of that elevator into a sea of uniformed officers and began shaking in my high-heeled shoes. I was one out of a handful of students that had

the privilege of attending this year's USPHS Scientific and Training Symposium and therefore one of a handful of people not in uniform. The entire conference was a fast-track training guide in the USPHS Commissioned Corps and I knew I was in for a great learning experience. I had the privilege of meeting officers in just about every category, from multiple agencies all over the country. I was privileged to attend the keynote presentation by the Surgeon General as well as meet and mingle with some very high-ranking Public Health Service Officers. I was moved by the support, guidance and encouragement I received from each of them. It was also very inspiring to know that all of the pharmacy officers that I met could not imagine their pharmacy careers without the USPHS.

After the 4 day symposium, my JRCOSTEP actually began as a pharmacy intern at the Catawba Service Unit in Rock Hill, South Carolina. I was extremely fortunate to work under the direction of my preceptor, CDR Misti Houck. While at Catawba I had so many opportunities to be directly involved in patient care. With a doctor, PAs, and nurses right across the hall I felt like I was truly part of an elite patient care team. In addition to my pharmacy duties, I was put in charge of recruiting and scheduling patients for the pharmacy-run tobacco cessation clinic. I had the opportunity to actively participate in patient visits, counsel on the use of tobacco cessation products, provide tips on how to quit, and educate the patient on what to expect. Throughout the summer I was even able to follow-up with a few patients who had been successful and I was honored that I could be part of their care. Participating in the smoking cessation clinic was one of the most rewarding parts of my job knowing I had a direct impact on a patient's life.

One of the highlights of my internship was following the home health nurse, LT Heather Rhodes, on multiple home visits. This gave me a great opportunity to connect with patients on a more personal level and see things from a perspective completely outside of the pharmacy realm. Since I had such a significant amount of patient contact this summer I feel I have greatly improved my patient-counseling skills. I was able to put my tobacco cessation and prevention knowledge to the test by presenting to the local children's program, Camp Kic-A-Wah as well as the annual health fair. Other features of the health fair included proper hand-washing techniques, fire safety from the local fire department, sugar shockers, and much more. After completing my JRCOSTEP I feel I have grown as an individual and as a professional. All the officers at the Catawba Service Unit are very kind, caring, influential and experienced public health care professionals. I feel that I have built lasting relationships and I will have mentors to help guide me in my future career.

JRCOSTEP experience in the Desert

submitted by Samantha Toulis, PharmD Candidate and CDR
Jing Li



PPTP Class Photo

One of the best learning experiences I've had in my pursuit of a career in pharmacy was my time as a JRCOSTEP with the Indian Health Service (IHS). During the summer of 2015, I worked at Phoenix Indian Medical Center (PIMC) in Arizona, and was able to get more comfortable performing tasks that pharmacists do on a daily basis. I counseled patients on their refilled or new prescriptions, witnessed the process pharmacists go through to screen new orders, worked on special projects, and got to experience several different aspects of pharmacy all under one roof.

What drew me to apply for the JRCOSTEP internship was the fact that the IHS provides a multitude of services to their patient population all in one place. Aside from my daily schedule, I sat in on several meetings with different providers in the hospital and was able to hear them discuss patient cases and their therapeutic plans from various angles. I enjoyed seeing the comprehensive care that a patient at PIMC receives and the way the entire site works in multi-disciplinary teams to provide the best care possible for their patients.

As a bonus, I was also able to travel to another IHS site in Whiteriver, AZ. I spent a week there and was able to witness a diabetes clinic that I found very interesting, work in the emergency department pharmacy, and round with the doctors and nurses in the dialysis clinic. It was nice to see the differences between the Whiteriver site and PIMC and meet more pharmacists and hear about their careers with the IHS.

To close out my internship, another JRCOSTEP and I had participated in the Pharmacy Practice Training Program (PPTP) where we met IHS pharmacists from all over the country. PPTP was a great opportunity to see how a pharmacist starting at IHS is trained at the national level, not just site specifically. We were able to practice counseling techniques that will stick with me forever, and it was fun to learn in such a comfortable setting with a small group of people.

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JRCOSTEP at Northern Navajo Medical Center submitted by Cindy Lau, PharmD Candidate



During the summer of 2015, I was selected for the JRCOSTEP Program at the Northern Navajo Medical Center (NNMC) in Shiprock, New Mexico. Throughout the internship, I had the opportunity to serve the Navajo Nation through an integrated approach. NNMC offered a supportive learning environment and challenged me every step of the way.

After finishing my second year of pharmacy school at the University of California, San Diego, I drove to Shiprock, New Mexico, located 40 miles southeast of the Four Corners. In the internship, I spent most of my mornings counseling patients on their medication. Through these consultations, my patients would share stories about their culture, lifestyle and struggles. Working with the Navajo population was a humbling experience that taught me to never assume patients understand the importance of medication adherence or how to use their medications properly. In the afternoons, I would work on a variety of projects, such as drug formulary reviews. I had the rare opportunity to analyze the dynamics between cost and efficacy and was even able to attend a P&T meeting. My other major project was to establish a naloxone-dispensing program at NNMC, an initiative

supported by the Surgeon General. I was responsible for setting up and conducting training sessions for pharmacists to prescribe and furnish naloxone, an opioid reversal agent used in drug overdose situations.

Since pharmacists in New Mexico can also have a Pharmacist Clinician license, I saw innovative practices where pharmacists initiated and adjusted therapies. As I shadowed pharmacists through different clinics, such as anticoagulation, seizure, and pain clinics, I began to appreciate the interactions between the doctors, nurses, and pharmacists to ensure that patients received adequate treatment. The NNMC staff was always willing to stop and answer my questions when I had a confused look on my face or got lost in the maze of offices and clinic rooms.

No matter what I was working on, there was always a preceptor who would answer my questions and walk me through the thought process behind their decision. They were always encouraging and willing to show me how to handle difficult situations. It was also not uncommon to have potluck lunches with homemade salsa and outings with the pharmacists after work.

Having grown up in San Francisco, I was awed and humbled by the peacefulness of the desert environment surrounding NNMC. I could see the stars at night and rainstorms that developed miles away. During the weekends, I had the opportunity to travel through the neighboring states with other JRCOSTEPs, hiking through the mountainous terrain of Colorado, visiting the national parks nearby, and figuring out the best places to camp during a rainstorm. These were definitely experiences I will never forget.

My JRCOSTEP experience at NNMC provided me a unique experience due to its integrated approach to patient care. Not only did I learn an incredible amount of therapeutics, but also the potential that the field of pharmacy holds. Overall, I am tremendously grateful for the opportunity to work at NNMC with LCDR Ryan Buff and the rest of the pharmacy team and I highly encourage all pharmacy students to participate in this program.



Attention Students: Next year's COA Symposium will be held in Oklahoma City, OK, from May 16-19. The theme for the conference will be **"Gimme Five: Building a Better Tomorrow through Prevention Today."** Students can attend the sessions for **FREE!** For more info, head on over to <http://symposium.phscof.org/>.



COSTEP Corner: Frequently Asked Questions submitted by LCDR Stephanie Daniels

What exactly is a COSTEP?

COSTEP stands for **C**ommissioned **O**fficer **S**tudent **T**raining and **E**xtern **P**rogram. There are two kinds of COSTEPs, Junior (JR) and Senior (SR) COSTEPs.

JRCOSTEPs are 4-12 week paid internships working directly with USPHS officers at various duty stations and agencies across the country, and students are eligible any time after the 1st professional year. Most pharmacy students serve their internships within the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Indian Health Service (IHS), or Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP).

SRCOSTEPs are for students about to enter their final year of full-time study, and selected students can receive up to 12 months of full-time pay and benefits in exchange for agreeing to serve a USPHS agency following graduation and licensure. The service obligation is equal to twice the amount of time sponsored, e.g. a student who receives 10 months of pay while in school must complete 20 months of service to his/her sponsoring agency.

Why should I consider a COSTEP?

JRCOSTEPs are excellent opportunities to directly experience non-traditional pharmacy careers and life in uniform. They offer incredible networking prospects and chances to positively impact both underserved populations and the overall health of our nation.

SRCOSTEPs are one of the very few ways to be selected for a full-time active duty commission when the USPHS Commissioned Corps are not accepting general applications for pharmacists. They also ensure that students will have a guaranteed income and position beginning immediately after graduation, and help provide financial security during the high-stress clinical year.

What benefits are COSTEP participants eligible for?

COSTEP students are active duty officers. As such, they receive basic pay as an O-1 (Ensign), tax-free housing and subsistence allowances, and costs of travel between their home and duty station may be paid. You can view military pay scales at the following website: <http://militarypay.defense.gov/pay/calc/index.html>. SRCOSTEP students receive full health care benefits through TRICARE for themselves and their dependents, and JRCOSTEP officers are eligible for emergency health care coverage.



If they are selected for an active duty commission in any uniformed service following graduation, both JR- and SRCOSTEP students are also able to apply time served during an internship toward their "time in service", which can positively impact both pay rates and eligibility for promotion.

When should I apply for a COSTEP?

If you're considering a JRCOSTEP, the best time to apply is the fall before the year(s) you'd like to serve an internship in. For example, if you'd like

to complete your internship during the summer break between your 2nd and 3rd professional years, apply during the fall semester of your 2nd year. The application deadline is December 31st annually.

If you'd like to apply for a SRCOSTEP, you must apply during the fall semester of your 3rd professional year, so that applications can be reviewed and students can be selected prior to beginning their final year of school. The annual application deadline is December 31st.

Where can I find more information on the COSTEP program?

The USPHS Commissioned Corps website is always the best place to start: www.usphs.gov. More specific information on the JRCOSTEP is available at <http://www.usphs.gov/student/jrcostep.aspx>, and on the SRCOSTEP at <http://www.usphs.gov/student/srcostep.aspx>. The PharmPAC's UPOC newsletter often includes perspectives from recent JRCOSTEP participants (such as those on pages 5 and 6 of this issue).

You can also reach out to the USPHS pharmacy officer who has volunteered as your school's University Point of Contact, or UPOC. The list is located at: <http://www.usphs.gov/corpslinks/pharmacy/documents/UPOCMasterList.pdf>

How do I apply for a COSTEP?

Applications are available through each COSTEP's respective page on the USPHS website during the annual application period. You can find links to them from the general student page at <http://www.usphs.gov/student/default.aspx>.

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Catawban Tales and Trails submitted by Elena Schaller and Jennifer Zhao, PharmD Candidates and LT Heather Rhodes

Rock Hill is a small town located in York County, South Carolina. Here one can find the quiet Catawba River as it winds through serene landscapes and wooded trails. Nestled among the tree lines is the Catawba Indian Nation, the only federally recognized Tribe in the state. There are 3,100 members enrolled in the Tribe. The Tribe has a long history, a rich culture, and a warm and familial atmosphere which run deep throughout the tight-knit community.



Community health nurse, LT Heather Rhodes (left), accompanied by Elena Schaller (center), Jennifer Zhao (right)

The Catawba Service Unit is an Indian Health Service ambulatory care facility that includes a Medical Clinic, Dental Clinic, Pharmacy, Laboratory, and Nutritional Department. A welcoming, 24-member staff collaborates to create a comfortable healing environment in which safe, timely, and effective care can be provided to each patient. Despite the various fields of care, the professions are unified as one interdisciplinary team, which shares a common goal of dedication to the well being of the population. Fundamental values such as quality, responsibility, and communication are key to the interactions between staff and patients. Additionally, innovation is demonstrated through a recent renovation of the facility.

We are fourth-year student pharmacists from the University of Pittsburgh that were fortunate to serve at the Catawba Service Unit for our ambulatory care rotation. During five weeks on site, we worked close-

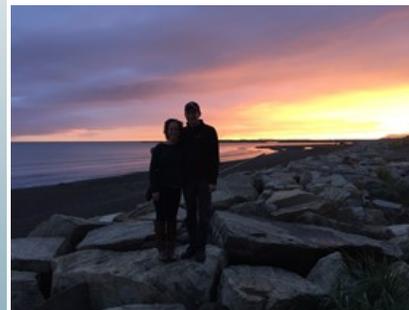
APPE at Norton Sound Regional Hospital in Nome, AK submitted by Hampton Cooper & Monica Litsas, PharmD Candidates and Dr. Kathryn Sawyer



From the moment we stepped off the plane in Nome, Alaska, we had a life changing and rewarding experience while on rotation at Norton Sound Regional Hospital. Coming from South Carolina, we had done some research on Nome, but we really had no idea what was waiting for us. We quickly learned that the hospital we would be working at was established to mainly serve the indigenous population of the Norton Sound Region in Alaska; we were about to be exposed to a different culture while making positive changes to improve outcomes in the patient population. By completing a cultural presentation, we were able to get to know the history and customs of the people we would be serving. We were able to apply what we learned to our patient interactions to empathize with them better, while achieving the desired outcomes.

Working in the pharmacy at Norton Sound allowed us to be exposed to multiple areas of pharmacy all at once, which is very unique compared to other rotation sites. On this rotation, we were able to gain experience in acute care, long term care, outpatient retail, pharmacy-managed anticoagulation, and long distance village care. We faced several challenges working with a diverse population of people that had some cultural and genetic differences that affected the way we made clinical decisions. With the help of our preceptors, and other hospital staff, we were able to work through the problems we faced and reach the best decision possible.

An experience that was uniquely different from previous rotations was the opportunity for us to help out in the pharmacy-managed anticoagulation clinic. From this opportunity, we learned how to check a patient's INR and make clinical decisions based off of therapeutic questioning and INR readings. We were also able to directly impact patient care through this process and properly advise patients on diet and lifestyle changes to improve their overall welfare. Having this time to talk with patients, mainly natives of Nome and the surrounding villages, allowed us a glimpse into the lives of these people and their own unique history.



Overall, this rotation has been an experience neither of us will ever forget. We are leaving Nome with new knowledge of various disease states, and genetic differences, as well as an appreciation for the many conveniences we take for granted in South Carolina. Having been able to step into the world of Nome, if only for a little bit of time, will be a memory we will hold onto forever.

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APPE at Federal Correctional Complex in Victorville

submitted by Nancy Machmud, PharmD Candidate and CDR Huu Nguyen

Going into pharmacy school I always thought I would come out working in retail. I had never given any thought to a pharmacist's role in a federal prison. Then on my fourth year meet and greet for potential preceptors, I stumbled upon 2 federal prison booths. The only thing that came to mind at that time was "Prison!! This can only be interesting." When it was time, I curiously selected the Federal Correction Complex (FCC) in Victorville as one of my rotation sites and I can happily say it was far from disappointing.



My 6 week rotation at FCC Victorville provided me with more than just an experience in ambulatory care but it allowed me to grow more confident as a person and as a future pharmacist. I had the wonderful opportunity to work with such a supportive and passionate pharmacy staff. My preceptor LT Charles Park, Staff Pharmacist LT Emily Winans, and Chief Pharmacist CDR Huu Nguyen first walked me through and showed me step by step how they run their clinics. Under their supervi-

sion I was able to conduct interviews and run the TB and anticoagulation clinic on my own where I addressed side effects and counseled new patients on their medication. I had the opportunity to meet with two HIV patients to counsel them on the importance of compliance and helped them figure out a way that would allow them to be more compliant with taking their HIV medication. Running these clinics not only gave me confidence, but it also gave me the chance to expand my knowledge on these disease states.

I also had the opportunity to be involved in other aspects that were pharmacy related. I performed a Drug Utilization Evaluation on NSAID use and was able to help the Chief Pharmacist in planning the next Pharmacy and Therapeutics meeting. But I have to say the most rewarding part of this rotation was being able to give a Diabetes class to the women in the camp. It felt good to see the women engaged and responsive to what you were talking about. Our role as pharmacists is to help improve the quality of health in others and I am thankful that FCC Victorville gave me the opportunity to do just that.

If I had the chance to do it all over again, I wouldn't hesitate. The pharmacy team at FCC Victorville is inspiring. Their determination and passion to improve the quality of health in the inmates' lives is what pharmacy is all about. I cannot thank my preceptors enough for the opportunity

Oncology Rotation at Alaska Native Medical Center

submitted by Kayla Runion, PharmD Candidate and CDR Anne Marie Bott

I had no idea what to expect when I arrived at the Alaska Native Medical Center. In a lot of ways this journey felt like a trip to the Land of Oz. When I applied for this opportunity I knew that I wanted a rotation that would be both challenging and rewarding. My oncology rotation with CDR Anne Marie Bott has exceeded that expectation. It has been nothing but remarkable. Oncology is a taxing field with abundant opportunity to improve patient outcomes. This rotation has allowed me to apply my knowledge in the patient setting to meet the needs of the community. I was intimidated by this task at first, but I knew that this experience would shape me into the pharmacist I have always strived to become.



L-R: Kayla Runion with CDR Bott

On a daily basis, under the supervision of CDR Anne Marie Bott, I work up patient orders for individuals receiving care that day. I assessed their lab values, calculated appropriate doses, and made dosage adjustment recommendations when necessary.

I also ensured the diluent and labels are appropriate so the technician may correctly prepare the chemotherapy. As patients are checked in, it is my duty to counsel them on the medications they are receiving under the supervision of my preceptor. Cancer is a frightening topic for patients and knowing that I can provide them the proper medications and a way to alleviate their side effects is very comforting.

For any P4 interested in oncology or simply looking for a challenging but rewarding experience, I would highly recommend this rotation. Every day brings new opportunities to grow as a professional. The oncology pharmacist is involved with the P & T committee, oncology and infusion center meetings and medication safety questions related to oncology medications. The phar-

FDA Rotation: Exploring the Role of a Pharmacist

submitted by Tyler Valente, PharmD

Candidates and CDR Ray Ford



In May of 2015, I made my way down to Washington, DC from New York City to begin a one month Pharmacy rotation at the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). I was selected to the Division of Drug Information (DDI) within the Center for Drug Evaluation and Research (CDER). DDI acts as a liaison between the FDA and the public, and my specific role within DDI was to aid in one of its public advocacy programs known as MedWatch. Whenever a patient has concerns about his/her medication(s), s/he calls the FDA via MedWatch for assistance. The MedWatch program is not only an excellent resource for patients and healthcare providers,

it also allows the FDA to monitor long-term safety profiles of medications, especially those that are not identified during short-term clinical trials.

Overall, MedWatch provided me with a rare opportunity to represent the FDA and hone my interpersonal communication skills. In addition to participating in the MedWatch program, I also responded to heartbreaking e-mails from the Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) community, informing them of the FDA's disposition and its progress in evaluating new medications for the devastating disease. It was quite rewarding to hear patients' appreciation at the end of each phone call or e-mail, which reaffirmed my desire to become a pharmacist and help improve patient outcomes.

My favorite aspect of the FDA rotation was the diverse array of student lectures taught by the respective subject matter experts. Through these lectures, I was able to connect with men and women from all disciplines within the FDA. The Office of Prescription Drug Promotion and the Office of Regulatory Affairs truly sparked my interest, and inspired me to research post-graduate fellowship in these fields. In addition to meeting with those from the FDA, I also met with some of the highest ranking members of the Public Health Service, who are extremely influential within the healthcare arena. During my time at the FDA, I was also fortunate enough to partake in the Advisory Committee meeting on the extremely controversial drug, flibanserin, or "the pink pill". I was also excited to have the opportunity to meet with the Director of Professional Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement (PASE) within CDER, from whom I received valuable career advice and mentorship. Additionally, I was invited to participate in a forum with the leaders of the Klinefelter Syndrome advocacy group, which allowed me to provide input from a pharmacy standpoint.

Having the opportunity to spend a month in our Nation's capital getting a 'crash course' in the FDA, is something for which I will be forever grateful. This was a truly enriching opportunity, in which I was able to see the impact and contribution of a pharmacist in non-traditional settings. My time at the FDA truly affected my outlook on the pharmacy profession, and significantly influenced my future career goals.

Experiences at Tséhootsooí Medical Center

submitted by Jeremy H. Westerfield,

Kristen Weglarz, and Lia Jasperse, PharmD

Candidates and LT Shannon Saltclah



"I cannot count the number of times I told myself I did not need to learn all this clinical stuff because I was going for the money and working retail anyway. Lab values, IVs, and physical exams, please just go away and if you mention residency one more time, I just might scream. Little did I know that was all going to change after talking to LT Shannon Saltclah as she sat behind her recruiting desk at the University of New Mexico College of Pharmacy. My school required both an institutional and rural rotation and after listening to LT Saltclah talk about the benefits of the Commissioned Corps and the opportunities at Tséhootsooí Medical Center (TMC) on the Navajo reservation, I thought I'll just knock out both requirements at once.

It is thirty days later and I am finished with my rotation. What was my experience like? Three-hundred and sixty degree change. The facility and staff are amazing; I was able to see firsthand pharmacists practicing up to the full scope of our training and abilities. I was able to shadow and participate in multiple pharmacist run clinics. I was able to learn more about residencies from actual residents going through the challenges and rewards the position brings. Supervisors took the time to talk about their expectations for new graduates and offered career advice based on their years of experience. The Commissioned Corps officers shared the positive and negative about their branch, allowing me to get a realistic picture of what to expect from this career path. Finally, the best part I was able to experience the Navajo culture and no matter what I choose to do with my life that will go with me.

I am now planning on applying for a residency and looking forward to the opportunity to join the Commissioned Corps. I am looking forward to working in a facility that allows me to practice at the top of my profession and sharing this experience with fellow pharmacists who feel the same. So if you have read this far, I am sure you know what I would recommend to any student considering a rotation at IHS. What are you waiting for; send an email or set-up an appointment with your experiential office now. Keep an open mind and when you have an unfor-

Fall/Winter 2015

Continued from page 8: Profile/Interview of an IHS Pharmacist who recently obtained the BCOP

Interviewer: What qualities do you think makes someone a good candidate for the BCOP certification?

CDR Bott: Any pharmacist practicing in the oncology setting would be an appropriate candidate. The test varies in types of questions from patient management and therapeutics to research and education to practice administration to public health.

Interviewer: What were some of the challenges that you faced while preparing for the exam and also taking the exam?

CDR Bott: The main challenge I faced prior to the exam was finding dedicated time to study. I was able to overcome this obstacle by listening to the review lectures while exercising and also by studying in the early morning hours prior to going to work.

Interviewer: Many perceive a tour in Alaska to be quite exciting and adventurous. What can you tell us about your experience?

CDR Bott: Alaska is definitely exciting and adventurous. Each season brings its own adventures. Spring and summer provide sunlight for camping, hiking, and fishing. Fall is a short transition highlighted by yellow and red fall colors while the winters bring snow for cross-country and downhill skiing and ice skating. There is always something exciting to do in Alaska.

Interviewer: What are some of your favorite hobbies when you are not working, ex. fishing, hiking, hunting, etc?

CDR Bott: I love to be outside with my family exercising, whether it is running, cross-country or downhill skiing, hiking, bicycling or playing hockey.

Interviewer: Do you have any tips for others who are interested in pursuing the board



CDR Bott checking chemotherapy



CDR Bott reviewing a patient's chart with a nurse at the Oncology Clinic

of pharmaceutical specialty in oncology pharmacy or BCOP?

CDR Bott: Start studying early – the review course is quite extensive!

Interviewer: What are some tools that you found useful for others who may be interested in pursuing the BCOP? (examples journal articles, textbooks, CEs, courses, study groups, the BPS study guide)

CDR Bott:

-ACCP and ASHP's Oncology Pharmacy Preparatory Review Course

This course offered audio recordings of the lectures. I found this extremely helpful as I spent many hours running while listening to these recordings.

-High-Yield Med Reviews Online Program

This was helpful because it provided many sample questions to work through to have a sense of the type of questions they'd ask.

-ACCP Pharmacotherapy Preparatory Review Course – Statistics Section

Already being BCPS certified I had a sense for the type of questions the board exam asks. I used the ACCP Pharmacotherapy Preparatory Review Course to review the key statistical concepts.



JRCOSTEP Experience in the Desert continued from page 13

Overall, my time as a JRCOSTEP not only exposed me to how pharmacy works at an IHS site, but it opened my eyes to what information is important for me to retain through my schooling. I have so much more appreciation for the things I'm learning this year in school because of my time at PIMC. It also gave me a taste of what 4th year APPE rotations will be like, and I will feel much more comfortable when that time comes for me next year. I'm so thankful for everything I was able to take part in, for the experiences that I can share with others, and for the relationships that I built with my preceptor and other co-workers.

I recommend this program to any student who has a strong desire to learn, or to any student who isn't sure what path they want to take with pharmacy. A JRCOSTEP position with the IHS will provide so many chances for involvement that can open a student's eyes to the possibilities of their pharmacy career. I look forward to spending more time at PIMC through an APPE rotation next year, and taking full advantage of the opportunity to grow as a pharmacist because of what I will learn there.

Catawban Tales and Trails continued from [page 16](#)



Catawba Service Unit, Rock Hill, SC

ly with the team on an array of projects, community outreach events, and patient care processes. We were also given the opportunity to shadow medical providers during patient visits and to assist dental providers with charting. These experiences fostered a well-rounded experience.

Inside of the clinic, our main responsibilities consisted of pharmacy dispensing, smoking cessation education, and influenza vaccine clinic management. At the start of flu season, the pharmacy department began holding clinics every week in order to vaccinate everyone registered at the clinic. Vaccinations were also offered to medical and dental patients on a daily basis. In a combined effort, the clinic made great strides to prevent the spread of influenza with 84 patients vaccinated in the pharmacy immunization clinic during our 5 week rotation.

Outside of the clinic, we partici-

pated in a variety of community outreach events. Often times we joined the community health nurse on patient home visits, community vaccination clinics, blood pressure screenings, and informative health programs held on the reservation. During one event, we educated 30 Head Start parents and staff about over-the-counter pain and fever medications that can be safely used in children. During another event, we joined 73 Tribal members for a one-mile family fun run/walk aimed at increasing awareness of domestic violence while increasing access for Tribal members to physical activity opportunities. We also collaborated to create and publish a digital video of a patient's success story with smoking cessation.

We both feel extremely lucky to have completed our ambulatory care rotation at an Indian Health Service facility, where pharmacists practice at the top of their licenses. It has been a learning and growing experience that we will carry with us throughout our professional careers. We will miss our Catawba friends, but are confident that they will continue advancing health care.



Oncology Rotation at ANMC continued from [page 17](#)

macists at this facility are able to do so much more than a typical institutional hospital.

This rotation has given me an understanding of the role of ambulatory care in the hospital setting. I have a better understanding of how each member plays a role in providing every patient with the proper care.

One of the great things about this rotation is being able to put your counseling skills to good use. Educating patients about their medication improves adherence by providing them with the appropriate tools to minimize side effects.

After the first week, I was able to counsel patients. This allowed me to develop my own counseling technique to ensure that I covered all the appropriate information necessary to ensure each patient knew how to take their medications. This opportunity also allowed for patients to clarify any questions they had about their regimens. It was so rewarding to know that I was able to make a difference and build relationships among the patients in the infusion center.

I know all the information I have learned from this rotation is going to help play a vital role in my rotations to come. The confidence and knowledge I have received from this rotation is more than I could have hoped for. It has sparked my interest in a possible future in oncology. I hope more students will experience this oncology rotation at ANMC. It is truly an experience that every student should have.



Continued from page 18...Experiences at Tséhootsooí Medical Center

gettable experience, remember me and spread the word. “

-Jeremy H. Westerfield



Poison Control Booth

“My name is Kristen Weglarz and I am a 4th year APPE student at the University of New Mexico, in the College of Pharmacy. When I heard about the rotation offered at Fort

Defiance at TséHootsooí Medical Center, my interest was piqued by the many areas that pharmacists were able to practice in at this site. I was in contact with LT Shannon Saltclah of the USPHS, who became my preceptor for this Advanced Pharmacy Practice Experience. She was instrumental in my being able to visit all the areas of my interest, as well as orchestrating my extracurricular activities and community outreach events. I had no idea what a life-changing and memorable experience I was going to have, but I knew it would be fun and that I would learn a lot.

I started my journey at TMC with hospital orientation. It wasn't your typical policies and procedures type of information. It was actually enjoyable information about the staff and patients, that made me feel like I was being let into a little family. I found myself interested in the culture of the Navajo patients and employees, and really enjoyed hearing about traditional Navajo beliefs and stories from employees at TMC, and the cultural differences that occur in the area that the hospital doesn't just ignore, but embraces and supports wholeheartedly.

I was able to shadow physicians in primary care clinic, emergency, chest clinic and pediatrics. I was able to practice physical assessment, consult patient charts, view labs and prior visit notes, make drug dosing recommendations, interview patients, and counsel on medications while working with the physician to take care of their patients. I always had questions, and the providers were always quick to respond. I was fortunate to meet patients and providers who

spoke Navajo, a language I had never heard before this experience.s

In our free time LT Saltclah suggested we take in the gorgeous views of Arizona and see the sites. So we spent our free time exploring and hiking, as well as visiting the local flea market on the weekend. We visited Canyon de Chelly in nearby Chinle, Arizona. The drive there was very scenic, and quite surprising to see so many trees as we headed west. We also hiked several nearby trails, and got to go to the top of Window Rock with a group of people from the TMC pharmacy. On our very first weekend in town, we were invited by LT Saltclah to the Chief Medical Officer's property to experience the annual mutton butchering. At this event I was able to participate in the festivities, including preparation of the sheep. My fellow UNM student and I were also taught how to make Navajo fry bread at this event. It was an unforgettable experience, with an amazingly kind patient population and providers that truly care about their patients. I know that I am recommending this rotation site to all the third year students, so they can make arrangements to visit during their fourth year. “

-Kristen Weglarz



With LT Saltclah

“My name is Lia Jasperse, and I am a 4th year pharmacy student at the University of New Mexico College of Pharmacy. I was very excited to start my second Advanced Pharmacy Practice Experience (APPE) at Tséhootsooí Medical Center (TMC) in Fort Defiance, Arizona. I am from Gallup, New Mexico, which is a 40-minute drive to Fort Defiance, so I

stayed in Gallup during this rotation and drove to TMC every day.

My preceptor for the rotation was LT Shannon Saltclah of the United States Public Health Service (USPHS). When I started my rotation LT Saltclah was working in the pharmacist run diabetes clinic, so that was where I spent most of my first two weeks of rotation. I sat in during the patient appointments with LT Saltclah and talked with the patients and helped counsel them on hypoglycemia. I was impressed with LT Saltclah's ability to work with the patients. She helped them to set goals and worked with each patient at their own pace to help them get their diabetes controlled.

Another program that I worked with LT Saltclah on was the Lifestyle Challenge Program (LCP) for Diabetes Prevention. She was a co-leader on the project and when I got to the site, they were at the end of the program. A lot of the participants in the program spoke highly of LT Saltclah and it was easy to see why; she is very motivated and passionate about everything that she does. Having her as my preceptor and following her in the DM clinic and for LCP really helped me to see clinical pharmacy in a good light.

Other pharmacy-run clinics that I enjoyed working in were the anticoagulation and asthma clinics. I was very happy with the fact that the pharmacists were able to meet with the patients one on one, counsel them and help make modifications on their regimens to help improve their health status. It definitely sparked my interest in clinical pharmacy.

Overall my rotation at Fort Defiance was a wonderful experience. I was exposed to many areas of pharmacy and I had the pleasure of working with so many wonderful and passionate healthcare providers. It was nice to see that the different departments of the hospital really integrated themselves not only at work, but outside of the hospital as well. I attended a few potlucks that were held to which people from different areas of the hospital attended.

I really enjoyed this rotation and found myself sad to leave the site. Between the staff and the patients, I felt at home at Tséhootsooí, and am going to miss working with such wonderful and kind people. “

-Lia Jasperse

Useful Info and Resource Links

Agency	Contact	Telephone	Website	Email
Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP)	CAPT Cassandra White	210-472-4510	http://www.bop.gov/jobs/positions/?p=Pharmacist	c3white@bop.gov
Centers for Disease Control (CDC)	LCDR Jennifer N. Lind	404-498-4339	www.cdc.gov	vox2@cdc.gov
Food and Drug Administration (FDA)	CAPT Beth Fritsch	301-796-8451	www.fda.gov	beth.fritsch@fda.hhs.gov
Health Resources & Svcs Adm. (HRSA)	LT Jane McLaughlin-Middlekauff	301- 443-1603	www.hrsa.gov	JMcLaughlin@HRSA.gov
Indian Health Service (IHS)	CDR Damion Killsback	301-443-2472	www.ihs.gov/pharmacy	damion.killsback@ihs.gov
ICE Health Services Corps (IHSC)	CAPT Chae Un Chong	202-210-1773	www.ice.gov/ice-health-service-corps	chae.u.chong@ice.dhs.gov
U.S. Coast Guard	CDR Aaron P. Middlekauff	202-475-5181	http://www.uscg.mil/health/cg1122/pharmacy.asp	Aa-ron.P.Middlekauff@uscg.mil
Instagram/Twitter			#usphspharmacy	
Facebook Page			www.facebook.com/USPHSPharmacists	
IHS Residency Information			http://www.ihs.gov/medicalprograms/pharmacy/resident/	
Uniform Help Desk Email			www.phsccuniform@hhs.gov	
Uniform Information			http://www.usphs.gov/aboutus/uniforms.aspx	
USPHS			http://usphs.gov	
USPHS PharmPAC Website			http://www.usphs.gov/corpslinks/pharmacy/	
USPHS Pharmacist Listservs			http://www.usphs.gov/corpslinks/pharmacy/listserv.aspx	
USPHS Student Opportunities			http://www.usphs.gov/student/	

Upcoming Pharmacy Meetings: 2015-2016

December 6-10, 2015	American Society of Health-System Pharmacist Midyear Clinical Meeting, (New Orleans, LA)
March 4-7, 2016	American Pharmacists Association Annual Meeting (Baltimore, MD)
April 8– 10, 2016	American College of Clinical Pharmacy Updates in Therapeutics® (Phoenix, AZ)
April 19-22, 2016	Academy of Managed Care Pharmacy (AMCP) Specialty Pharmacy Annual Meeting and Expo (San Francisco, CA)
April 28-30, 2016	ACCP/ASHP Oncology Pharmacy Preparatory Review and Recertification Course (Dallas, TX)
May 16-19, 2016	Commissioned Officers Association (COA) USPHS Scientific and Training Symposium (Oklahoma City, OK)



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RADM Pamela Schweitzer
USPHS Chief Pharmacy Officer

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Thank you from the UPOC Newsletter Workgroup!

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We want your submission of articles and pictures! Please email LCDR Honeylit Cueco and she will forward them to the appropriate section leads!

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