



# UNIVERSITY POINT OF CONTACT NEWSLETTER

***A publication of the U. S. Public Health Service (USPHS)  
Commissioned Corps Pharmacists Professional Advisory  
Committee (PharmPAC) University Point of Contact (UPOC)***

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## **Meeting the Assistant Secretary for Health and the Surgeon General: A Reflection on My First 48 Hours as a Student Pharmacist in the Office of Generic Drugs**

Submitted by Michaela L. Myerson, 2022 Doctor of Pharmacy Candidate, University of New England

As I stood in the halls of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) headquarters, my thoughts were suddenly interrupted with a sharp crisp voice stating, "Attention on Deck". I reactively stood straight and turned to see the U.S. Surgeon General, Vice Admiral Vivek Murthy enter the DHHS vaccination room immediately in front of me. He paused, greeted me, and then proceeded on into the room.

Just 36 hours before, I had relocated to Maryland and walked through the doors at the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for the first time to begin my Advanced Pharmacy Practice Experience (APPE) in the Office of Generic Drugs.

On my first day at the FDA, I was amazed and overwhelmed by the size of the White Oak Campus, the headquarters for the FDA. I completed the badging process in the morning and my preceptor Lieutenant Sylvia Park, Pharm.D., a Commissioned Corps Officer in the United States Public Health Service (USPHS) and University of New England alumnus, gave me a tour of the campus and introduced me to the ins and outs of the FDA. Lieutenant Park was on campus during my first week because she was managing an



Michaela Myerson with Admiral Rachel Levine, U.S. Assistant Secretary for Health

## Meeting the Assistant Secretary ... continued from page 1

influenza vaccine clinic on campus as part of her public health duties. Four hours into my APPE, I learned that I would be joining Lieutenant Park to vaccinate at the DHHS headquarters in Washington, D.C. the following day.

The next morning, Lieutenant Park and I drove from the White Oak Campus to the DHHS headquarters. The vaccination team was assigned to vaccinate 12 people that day against the influenza virus. This list included Admiral Rachel L. Levine, Assistant Secretary for Health (ASH) and Vice Admiral Vivek H. Murthy, U.S. Surgeon General, as well as other DHHS staff and change makers. The opportunity to stand in the room with such influential figures was a massive honor. Admiral Levine and Vice Admiral Murthy both took time to speak with me and ask questions about my education and future goals. They were both so humble and kind.



Michaela Myerson and USPHS officers with Admiral Vivek Murthy, U.S. Surgeon General

When I tell my friends and family and now you, that I drove to Maryland, started my APPE rotation in the Office of Generic Drugs at the FDA, and met Assistant Secretary for Health and the Surgeon General all in 48 hours, I can hardly believe the words I am saying! Working at the FDA has always been a dream of mine and I am incredibly lucky to have this opportunity as a Student Pharmacist. As I write this article on day 5 of my rotation, I am looking forward to the skills I will develop and the connections I will make in the next 5 weeks. The FDA generously offers so many opportunities for student pharmacists and I am proud to have been a small part of this important public health effort.

### Editor's Note:

The UPOC newsletter team is pleased to announce the Winter 2021 issue. Our goal is to provide the highest quality and most relevant USPHS information applicable to student interests.

As Editor-In-Chief, I continue to look forward to welcoming new ideas, showcasing informative articles relevant to your interest and to providing a well-rounded insight on what it's like to be a PHS pharmacy officer.

We thank those students and pharmacists who submitted articles and willingly shared their experiences about their rotation/or pharmacy practice site, unique service or residency experience. Your reflections and stories give our readers a glimpse of the diverse opportunities the PHS offers.

We hope you find this edition enlightening and informative. This issue features a collection of pharmacy student experiences and officers in action from various duty stations. Students, we wish you the best of luck in school and your career endeavors!

Best wishes on your success,

LCDR Brett Whitehead, PharmD, BCPS, CDCES



## An Enriching Virtual Rotation Experience

*Submitted by: Christine Oh, Pharm.D./MBA Candidate 2022*

After a long four years of undergraduate studies and four years of pharmacy school, I was ready to graduate. I was in my final year of pharmacy school and excited to enter the professional world of pharmacy. For my pharmacy school rotations, I made sure to apply to sites that were from a variety of different settings so that I could explore options after graduation. In the fall semester of my third year, I knew I wanted to pursue a rotation at the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). I wanted to learn more about the regulatory process and knew the Agency would have interesting projects that would offer more perspective on its role in public health. I knew the program was competitive, but I applied hoping for any chance. In January 2021, I was surprised and honored to be accepted into the FDA Pharmacy Student Experiential Program. A dream had become reality.

My preceptors, Dr. Tri Le and LCDR Tramara Dam, were welcoming and determined to make my rotation experience enriching and engaging. During my rotation, I was fortunate to meet with one of my preceptors in person since we were both located in Virginia. Although the rotation was virtual due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, I was determined to make the most of my rotation experience.

I was provided a student guide that showed a list of staff members from different offices who were willing to meet with students. Before starting my rotation, I was unsure if I would get networking opportunities since the rotation was in a virtual setting. I started to reach out as soon as possible since my rotation would only be five-weeks long. I was able to hold about forty informational interviews. I met with professionals all over the Agency and several officers in the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps. Everyone was friendly and willing to share their experiences. Their passion for protecting public health was inspiring. I would also ask for career advice at the end of every meeting. The student lecture series for pharmacy students in the Experiential Program was informative and helped me learn more about the roles different offices had in the Agency. I was also able to meet other students who were on rotation at the Agency through a virtual networking event created for students. This showed how dedicated the Agency was to creating an enriching experience for students even in a virtual setting.

My preceptors said in my first meeting that this rotation is what you make of it. They emphasized that you will get the effort you put into this rotation. I made sure to keep this in mind as the rotation progressed. I got the opportunity to work on a variety of impactful projects during my time at the Agency. My rotation was in the Office of



LCDR Tramara Dam (left) with Christine Oh, Pharm.D./MBA candidate (right)

# Providing Pharmacy Services to the Underserved Amidst the Covid-19 Pandemic

Submitted by Ms. Amelia Winters, 2021 PharmD Candidate

After four years of pharmacy school, I finally landed myself in prison – for my final Advanced Pharmacy Practice Experience (APPE). I had looked forward to my final rotation at the Federal Medical Center (FMC) Lexington for over a year, and I am pleased to report that my anticipation was met with an experience well beyond my expectations. FMC Lexington is an administrative security institution within the Bureau of Prisons (BOP), providing care to over 1,700 inmates. FMC Lexington provides both outpatient and inpatient services and has specialized missions in orthopedic surgery candidates and bone marrow transplant candidates. Through interactions with staff and inmates, I was able to personally experience the challenges and privileges of serving patients in a correctional institution health care environment.

Going into this rotation, I was not sure what to expect. I was immediately impressed to find out that the pharmacy at FMC Lexington provided access to community, hospital, and ambulatory care pharmacy services. Having three major fields of pharmacy was fascinating to me and is not something many pharmacy students get the chance to experience. The pharmacy staff was also very flexible and allowed me to get involved in each area as much as I wanted, according to my career interests.

My initial interest was to better understand the challenges of marginalized populations in order to serve them more effectively and compassionately. It is my personal belief that every human being, no matter their circumstances, has the right to quality health care. My preceptor played an integral role in ensuring that I was exposed to many of the challenges inmates and healthcare providers must overcome in order to provide quality care. For example, low health literacy, limited healthcare prior to incarceration, or history of drug use and mental health disorders all presented significant challenges for many of the patients I interacted with. These obstacles require a partnership between administration, pharmacy, healthcare providers, correctional staff, and inmates to find the best available treatment(s) for each individual.

Much of my time at FMC Lexington was spent engaging with patients in an ambulatory care clinic addressing multiple disease states including diabetes, lipid management, anticoagulation, and chronic pain management. I worked up patients prior to appointments and was present to observe and communicate with them during encounters. Afterwards, the pharmacist and I would debrief and I was able to share my thoughts and suggestions, which we were able to implement. Finally, I practiced documentation after clinic appointments using the SOAP format.



Ms. Amelia Winters, 2021 PharmD Candidate

*Opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the Federal Bureau of Prisons or the Department of Justice.*

## Alaska Bound

Submitted by Courtney Bunner, PharmD Candidate 2022, West Virginia University  
Preceptor: LCDR Michelle Locke, PharmD, BCACP

Ever since I found out Alaska Native Medical Center (ANMC) was available as a 4<sup>th</sup> year rotation in pharmacy school, I was determined to get there. Spending five weeks in Alaska has been more amazing than I expected. Not only has my free time here been one great adventure after the other, but the rotation itself has been a great experience. Having the opportunity to learn more about Alaskan Native culture and to be able to use the knowledge that I have gained over the past six years makes the countless hours of studying, stressing and losing sleep, definitely worth it.



Courtney Bunner, on top of Mt. Healy in Denali National Park

I had the pleasure of spending my time on the Transitions of Care Outpatient rotation. This consisted of delivering medications to patients at ANMC that were soon transitioning to an outpatient setting. I had enough one-on-one time to be able to counsel patients thoroughly on the medications and answer any questions that they might have for me. One particular interaction with a patient stuck out to me. When delivering medications to an elderly man, he stated that he spoke broken English, so it might take time for him to form words back to me. Therefore, I made sure to give him time to ask questions after counseling on each medication, ensuring that he was understanding everything. As I was leaving, he said, “quyanaasinaq”, and stated this meant “thank you very much” in Yup’ik. He also taught me how to say “goodbye” or “good luck”, which was “ukudigada”. I am grateful for this brief interaction with this man and try to remember for every patient, if you listen to them, you might learn just as much from them as they do from you.

A career as a pharmacist in the United States Public Health Service (USPHS) at ANMC is a unique opportunity. When you think of combining every aspect of pharmacy together into one, this is what it is like at ANMC. In the outpatient pharmacy, there is a dispensing side, multiple counseling rooms that allow for the dispensing pharmacist to counsel each patient on their medication(s), transitions of care pharmacists who facilitate smooth transitions from inpatient to outpatient, and medication history technicians. The inpatient pharmacy is only one floor above. The opportunities that you get as a USPHS pharmacist to work with the underserved population of the country are endless.

Fortunately, I have been able to enjoy the beauty of Alaska as well. I caught my first salmon in Talkeetna, took a small plane ride to see the mountains of Denali and landed on a glacier, drove through vast mountains and valleys, hiked a strenuous hike up to Mt. Healy, zip-lined through the forest, ate amazing food, and still much more to come. I am so grateful for this opportunity and highly encourage future students/pharmacists to take a leap and experience Alaska and careers in the USPHS.



## My Inpatient Experience at Alaska Native Medical Center

*Submitted by Lorraine Chang, PharmD Candidate 2022, Virginia Commonwealth University School of Pharmacy  
Preceptor: LT David Moore PharmD, LT Matthew Deraedt PharmD, Liz Saltz PharmD*

When I heard about the Indian Health Service during my third year of pharmacy school, I was excited. This was an opportunity to learn more about Alaska Native and American Indian people, who are groups that I had little to no exposure to in Virginia. There were opportunities in Alaska, New Mexico, and Arizona but I found myself drawn to the unique history of Alaska and its relationship with the Indian Health Service. I applied and wrote a letter expressing my interest for the program at the Alaska Native Medical Center (ANMC) in Anchorage. I was fortunate enough to be accepted into the rotation for June-July 2021.

Before I started my rotation, I had no clue what to expect from an inpatient rotation. Would it be more management oriented, would there be a greater focus on internal medicine, or would there be an emphasis on critical care? I was pleasantly surprised that I was able to have experiences in all of those areas and more. The rotation included areas such as internal medicine, pain and palliative care, the emergency department, pediatrics, infectious disease, and critical care. This was perfect for me because I had an interest in pediatrics, but was curious about other areas of pharmacy that I have yet to experience within a hospital setting. This ANMC rotation was the first time I was able to round with a pain and palliative care pharmacist. I learned about epidurals, dermatomes, and venous thromboembolism prophylaxis in surgery patients. My preceptors in the emergency department, LT David Moore and LT Matthew Deraedt, and pharmacy resident Dr. Jessica Hiney, taught me how to track patients appropriately, interpret ED cultures, and led interesting topic discussions with me. I was able to attend trauma activations and medical emergencies with the ED pharmacists throughout my rotation, even when I was not in the emergency department. I appreciated the experience of learning the role pharmacists play in adult and pediatric trauma activations.

One unique aspect of this rotation was learning about the United States Public Health Service (USPHS). During my first week, CAPT Kara King held a student talk to teach us about the USPHS. I learned that these commissioned officers work at various agencies, such as the Federal Bureau of Prisons, the Indian Health Service (IHS), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). They serve under the Surgeon General in order to protect, promote, and advance public health and safety within the United States. They deploy in times of national crisis or emergency, such as Hurricane Florence in 2018, and they also conduct work in underserved areas. Many of the pharmacists who work at ANMC are Commissioned Corps officers and were available to speak about their experiences and answer any questions I had about their roles.

After work and during the weekends I was able to see a wide variety of what Alaska had to offer. Three of my classmates and I were able to hike Rabbit Lake Trail and Flattop Mountain. We went to Denali National Park to view North America's highest mountain on the Fourth of July weekend. One weekend we drove to Seward to see the Kenai Fjord National Park which included the glaciers and wildlife in that area. Other areas we traveled to were Alyeska, Talkeetna, Kincaid Park, and the Potter Marsh Bird Sanctuary. One of my favorite parts of the trip was learning about Native



Flattop Mountain Trail – Anchorage, AK

## Pharmacy on the Front Lines

Submitted by Ms. Jimmi Patel, Pharm.D. Candidate 2022

March 2020, while the world was coping with a global pandemic, as a second-year pharmacy student, I felt that my role in this global crisis was insignificant. Since high school, I had dreamt of being a pharmacist so that I could pursue my dream of helping patients by providing them with efficient care. Throughout the years, I have dedicated myself to volunteering and constantly learning so that I could improve myself as a future healthcare provider. Yet there I was, so close to starting my final year of pharmacy school classes, completely helpless. A few days after receiving word that the school year would be shifted to virtual until further notice, I got the opportunity to volunteer and set up one of the first COVID-19 testing clinics in the Chicago area with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

Under the guidance of pharmacists and PHS officers, I was given the chance to work on the frontlines during the pandemic and help protect patients. At first, I was hesitant since my knowledge was minimal; however, I knew that as a future pharmacist, I made a promise to my community that I would help to protect patients and one of my responsibilities included being an adaptive learner. My work at the COVID-19 testing clinic comprised of ensuring appropriate CDC recommendation safety protocols were followed, providing instructions to patients in screening for the virus, demonstrating proper testing sample collection techniques, and processing nasal specimens with rapid testing for COVID-19 Virus. Over the months, I was able to see pharmacists, and even my role at the clinic, evolve as new guidelines came out.



As I worked alongside some of the most dedicated PHS officers, I was inspired to pursue a rotation with FDA's Pharmacy Student Experiential Program. During my final year, I was accepted for a rotation with the Office of Management and the Office of Manufacturing Quality with my preceptors, Dr. Tramara Dam and Dr. Tri Le. The day before my rotation, one of my preceptors, Dr. Dam, was recruited for deployment and the future of my rotation seemed uncertain. As my preceptor wrapped up and moved across the country to help patients, I was again reminded of PHS officers' dedication. Fast forward as I wrap up my final week of rotations. I can safely say that, despite the hurdles of virtual learning, I have gained an expansive knowledge on a pharmacist's role in the FDA and in the healthcare field. During my rotation, I was able to meet with 25 different pharmacists and learn about their unique roles at the FDA.

One theme seemed constant since the beginning of the pandemic, and it was the constant change and having the ability to adapt. Whether it was my changing role at the testing clinics, learning to adapt to working from home or a pharmacist's role in the healthcare system, change is constant and as pharmacists, our roles are constantly evolving. Even during the past year, as pharmacists worked on the frontlines of the pandemic at community pharmacies, hospitals, and testing clinics, we have risen to the challenge to make sure our patients are protected and care for. Throughout my rotation, I was able to see pharmacists adapt to unique roles in the Agency and PHS. Overall, I have been grateful to have the opportunity to learn more about PHS and be inspired to improve myself in the future.



Jimmi Patel, Doctor of Pharmacy  
Candidate Class of 2022  
Midwestern University College of  
Pharmacy (Chicago)

## Tobacco Cessation in the Native Population

*Submitted by Dylan McDonald, PharmD Candidate, University of Kansas School of Pharmacy*

I am from the St. Louis area and have lived my whole life in the Midwest. I love to travel, so getting the chance to see the beautiful state of Alaska and experience different cultures was very appealing to me when applying for rotations. I am also very passionate about working with under-served populations. This was another reason I was very interested in the rotation at the Alaska Native Medical Center and why I am also doing several rotations at the St. Louis VA health system.

After graduation, I am considering a residency and specializing in ambulatory care. I really enjoy working with patients to improve and manage their disease states in the clinic setting. However, I am looking forward to the rest of my rotations over this next year to help determine the career in pharmacy that will work best for me.

Throughout my time at ANMC, I got the chance to learn more in depth about the oncology field and chemotherapy in clinical practice. Oncology is such an interesting specialty and one that is constantly changing and developing new medications. My favorite part of the rotation was getting the chance to counsel patients on their home medications and hopefully make them more comfortable while undergoing treatment. I also enjoyed the opportunity to work on many different projects such as a drug information paper, drug monograph for formulary addition, drug utilization evaluation, journal club presentation and articles for the Alaska Pharmacist Association. These projects, some of which I had not completed prior to this rotation, helped expand my knowledge and will help better prepare me for my future rotations and residency, if I take that path. I also prepared and led topic discussions with pharmacists in the infusion center, which aided in my better understanding of topics which included chemotherapy related diseases, breast cancer, leukemia, colorectal cancer and lung cancer.



Eric McDonald and Dylan McDonald on a glacier cruise in Seward, AK.

When not at rotation, I spent my free time exploring Alaska as much as possible over these five weeks. In the Midwest, the scenery is not nearly as beautiful as Alaska, so I was in awe of the huge mountains, crystal clear blue waterways and all the wild life. Luckily for me, I got the chance to go on this adventure with several other STLCOP students, including my husband. We have been to Denali National Park and had perfect weather to see the mountain and even had a bear right next to our tour bus. We went to Seward and took a boat cruise to see glaciers and hiked the Harding Icefield Trail. We ate and shopped along the Spit in Homer. Also, I loved getting the chance to try new local foods. So far, I have tried reindeer, yak, spruce tips and a lot of fresh Alaskan seafood.

Throughout this rotation I learned so much and got to grow my skills via projects and patient counseling. I am so glad I applied and received this rotation and got this experience. My advice for anyone with an upcoming rotation at ANMC is to work hard, learn more about local cultures and be adventurous.



## Venturing Past my Comfort Zone into Alaska

Submitted by Kayla Rowe, PharmD Candidate 2022, Virginia Commonwealth University  
Preceptor: CAPT Anne Marie Bott, PharmD, BCPS, BCOP

I spent my childhood moving to a new country every 3 years due to my father's employment. Each new country offered its unique challenges and opportunities. I grew to appreciate not only the subtle differences in our culture but also just how much I had in common with people from across the globe. When I learned that there was a 5 week rotation in Alaska, I was intrigued but hesitant at the thought of having to travel so far alone. I eventually convinced myself that if I wasn't doing something that was a little scary, I wasn't challenging myself to grow. So I decided to step outside of my comfort zone and I haven't regretted it for a second. I feel incredibly lucky to have had the opportunity to continue developing an understanding of others who may experience life very differently than me whilst exploring the awesome beauty of the last frontier. I strongly believe this rotation has helped make me not only be a better-rounded pharmacist but also a more empathetic person.

I was nervous not only due to being alone so far from home, but I was also nervous because oncology was one of my weakest subjects in school. I wanted to make sure that I had at least one rotation in oncology in order to strengthen my knowledge and gain more confidence. My fears were able to subside once I met the staff of pharmacists, technicians and nurses who were all so welcoming and open to answering my questions and offering assistance with projects. They are all so kind and patient with me and I felt like every day I learned so much from them. I had the opportunity to assess the appropriateness of chemotherapy, supportive care, and monitoring by reviewing patient orders daily. I also led topic discussions with staff pharmacists on breast cancer, leukemia, lung cancer, colorectal cancer and tumor lysis syndrome. I was also able to practice counseling patients on their home medications discussing the indication, administration directions and side effects. I created monographs for the P&T committee to review, which I had not done before. So I was glad to have a chance to participate in the process of adding new medications to formulary. Throughout the rotation I began to feel like I had a much better grasp on how to utilize resources, including the National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN) guidelines, a skill that you can only get through practice. One of my favorite things I learned about was the Alaska Native tribes. I attended an orientation where we discussed cultural differences in communication, body language, beliefs and values. I thoroughly enjoyed being able to apply what I learned when interacting with them on a daily basis.

During my free time in Alaska, I was able to hike various trails such as Flattop Mountain and Rabbit Creek. There was even an instance where I managed to snap a picture of a moose in Kincaid Park. I also explored downtown Anchorage, eating out at places such as Moose's Tooth, Snow City Café, and Wild Scoops. Myself and some other pharmacy students rented bikes and rode along the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail which was a great way to appreciate the beauty of coastal Alaska. We made some short weekend trips to various towns and cities including Girdwood, Seward, Palmer and Homer, all of which offered unique experiences and showcased the diversity of Alaska. Some of my favorite experiences, however, have been kayaking on Eklutna Lake and taking a boat tour of the Kenai Fjords. Both experiences were breath taking and were truly once in a lifetime. I have seen many countries and been to many vastly different places throughout my lifetime and Alaska has definitely made it on my list of my favorite places in the world.



Kayla Rowe hiking in Chugach State Park on the Rabbit Creek Trail.

## Alaska 2021; Taking my Education to New Heights

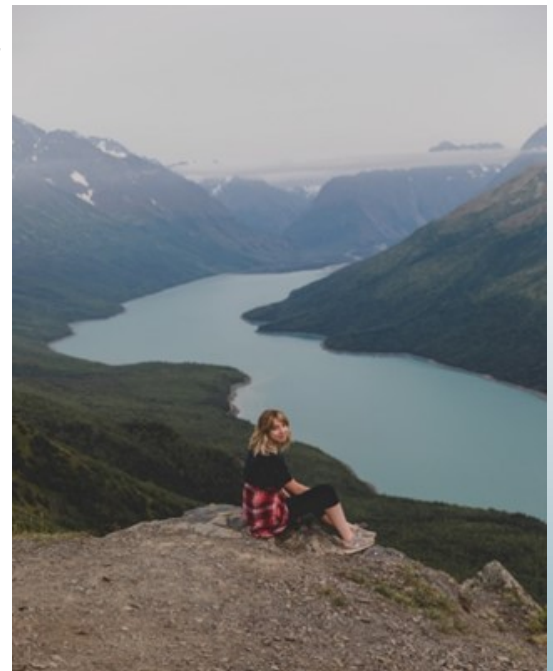
Submitted by Lainey Vargo, PharmD Candidate 2021, West Virginia University School of Pharmacy  
Preceptor: CAPT Anne Marie Bott, PharmD, BCPS, BCOP

I was born and raised in a small town in West Virginia, so small I usually have to refer to the next closest “city” when people ask me where I’m from. Yet, I’ve always had the desire to travel and explore and see what lies beyond my small town. I learned about the Alaska Native Medical Center (ANMC) rotation during my first year of pharmacy school. A former student who had completed the rotation gave a small presentation about her experience and I just remember being absolutely awestruck. As my fourth year of pharmacy school approached, I worried I wouldn’t be able to do the rotation I’ve dreamed about for the past 4 years due to the ongoing pandemic. We began applying for the rotation and it came with the “may not happen” disclaimer. Finally, months later, as the rotation was approaching we were confirmed to go! I was beyond excited to have this opportunity to immerse myself in a completely different culture all the while learning things to benefit my future career!

Post-graduation I plan on completing a PGY-1 residency and a PGY-2 oncology residency. So, I couldn’t have been more thrilled to find out that I was placed on the oncology rotation here at ANMC. I was lucky enough to also complete an oncology rotation back home in West Virginia. Having the opportunity to experience working with patients from unique backgrounds at two distinct institutions has prepared me better than I could have imagined. It’s been an amazing experience to see and compare the different daily operations and functions of each infusion center.

Even though I’m so far from home, the hospitality of the staff here truly made me feel at home. My preceptor, CAPT Anne Marie Bott, all the infusion center pharmacists, technicians, and nurses made me feel so welcome. I even met a few other staff from West Virginia and it was incredible to hear everyone’s story. I spent my days in the infusion center pharmacy using resources such as the National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN) guidelines to review chemotherapy orders and verify treatment regimens for patients, learning the daily operations and workflow from the other pharmacists and technicians, and working on various projects such as formulary monographs and drug use evaluations. However, my favorite part of the day was getting to counsel patients on their medication they take home with them. The interactions I had with the Alaska Native people immensely enriched each day. I learned so much about the different cultures from all over the state, and had so many meaningful interactions that will stick with me throughout my lifetime. Everything I had the opportunity to learn and experience on this rotation has furthered my oncology knowledge and skills and will greatly benefit me in my future career.

During my free time in Alaska I experienced many incredible adventures! My classmates and I explored all over Anchorage. We ate at many amazing places such as Moose’s Tooth, rode bikes on the Coastal Trail where we saw multiple moose, and climbed to the top of Flat Top Mountain! We adventured all the way up to Talkeetna and Denali, and all the way down to Girdwood and Seward. The



Lainey Vargo Hiking Twin Peaks Trail – Eklutna Lake, Anchorage AK

## A once in a lifetime opportunity

Submitted by Ms. Jammie Luong, Pharm.D. Candidate 2022

When I received my rotation schedule in December 2020, I was thrilled to see that my ambulatory care rotation was going to be with the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) at Federal Correctional Complex Victorville (FCC Victorville). However, I became very anxious in the few days before the start day, uncertain of how COVID-19 would impact the prison. When that first day arrived, my colleague and I waited in front of the Central Administration Building and conversed about how nervous we were both feeling. When I saw LCDR Madrigal drive through the parking lot with her mini cart, waving at us with a big smile, I felt more at ease. LCDR Madrigal had a U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) uniform on, and I later learned to appreciate the service and loyalty that all USPHS leaders have in serving underrepresented populations.

Little did I know, this rotation would be one of my favorites, filled with memories that I would never forget. My preceptors LCDR Madrigal, LT Ozuruigbo, and Dr. Nguyen are all so passionate about their career as pharmacists; their dedication to the prison population is never ending. Every step of the way, they have provided me nothing but eye opening experiences from anticoagulation clinics to replying to providers using evidence based medicine.



On my first day I was given an orientation on expectations for the following 6 weeks. I also had the chance to go with Dr. Nguyen to the penitentiary to do directly observed therapy administration and I learned the significance of being flexible with my schedule. While in school we were taught how to interact with patients in very simple and mostly ideal environments; however, that isn't always the case. What's special about working at BOP FCC Victorville is the variety of patients that you encounter, requiring you to be innovative in educating the patients about the medications that they are taking. The experiences I had on the first day set the momentum for the remainder of my rotation, where I continuously learned new things every day. I saw how the pharmacy runs and while similar to how other pharmacies operate, there are always unique aspects of being in a correctional environment. I learned how to fill and deliver medications to inmates and prepare unit doses. Not only that, I had the chance to mix insulins as well as interact with inmates to see how they were doing with their medications. In addition to the daily interactions I had with inmates, I had the opportunity to review patient charts in various topics such as anticoagulation, diabetes, HIV, and medication treatment for opioid use disorder.

My 6 weeks of rotation spent with the BOP at FCC Victorville has molded me into a more confident and independent student pharmacist. I am beyond grateful to have received outstanding mentoring from my preceptors who guided my rotation. As I continue through my last year of pharmacy school, I will take the experiences that I have learned at FCC Victorville and incorporate those with all things that I do.

*Opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the Federal Bureau of Prisons or the Department of Justice.*



(Left to Right) Bijou Kim, 2022 PharmD Candidate, LT Pearl Ozuruigbo, LCDR Crystal Madrigal, Dr. Tina Nguyen, and Jammie Luong, 2022 PharmD Candidate saying farewell on last day of APPE rotations at FCC Victorville

Fall/Winter 2021

## Transitioning From PharmD Candidate to PharmD

Submitted by Colton Iverson, PharmD

P4 year is fun, exciting, and stressful all at the same time. It is fun because you get to meet new people and see many unique pharmacy practice settings. It is exciting because you can see light at the end of the tunnel and you can showcase everything you have learned throughout pharmacy school. It can be stressful from assignments and preparing for NAPLEX/MPJE. Additionally, for those considering residency, you may not know where you will be living until a couple of months before having to move. Overall, I really enjoyed my final year as a student. However, I was also excited to graduate and begin the next chapter of my life.

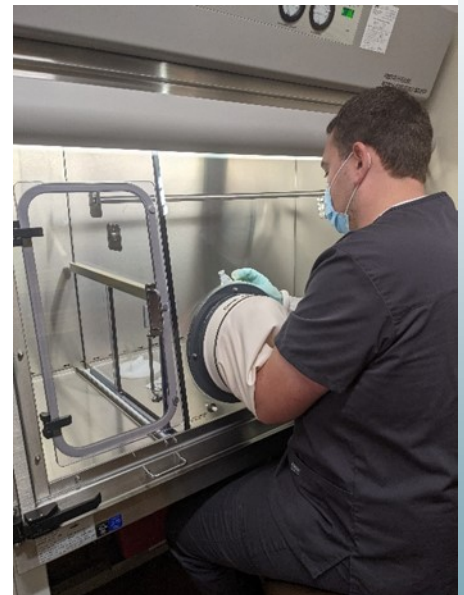


During my P4 rotations I completed my ambulatory care rotation at the Cass Lake Indian Health Service (IHS). This quickly became one of my favorite rotations. Even as a student, I was able to practice at the top of my license. I was afforded the privilege to act as clinical lead for warfarin monitoring, tobacco cessation, and various other pharmacist-run clinics. This presented an opportunity to exercise my clinical knowledge so that I could provide a higher level of care expected of every pharmacist. I most enjoyed the blend of clinical knowledge and patient contact afforded with ambulatory care. After this rotation, I was convinced of which setting I wanted to practice in after graduation.

In late February, I was ecstatic to learn that I had matched with the Cass Lake IHS residency program. My first day was August 2<sup>nd</sup>, which is a little later than most residencies. However, I found starting later to be extremely beneficial. It gave plenty of time after graduation to move homes and study for NAPLEX/MPJE. Additionally, since I was licensed on day 1, I was able to begin practicing as a pharmacist right away. That being said, the first shift working as a pharmacist can be exciting and a little intimi-

dating all at the same time. After four years of pharmacy school and countless hours of studying, you will have the knowledge needed. However, in the moment it may not always feel that way. Especially, since you are now ultimately responsible for patient safety. Fortunately, IHS recognizes this is a big responsibility and ensures there are other pharmacists available to help with this transition. Frequent feedback from my RPD and other pharmacists helped with this transition and building confidence in myself as a new practitioner.

I would highly recommend IHS to anyone who is interested in a pharmacy residency. It has been a great experience for me. I feel like I am learning and experiencing something new every day.



## An Incredible JRCOSTEP Experience at Fort Yuma

Submitted by Ms. Isabella Hernandez, Student Pharmacist  
Preceptor LT Amy Nham, PharmD, MPH, BCPS

I first learned about the JRCOSTEP program through conversations with my mentors, who sparked my interest in the USPHS. I was immediately interested in the USPHS. I have a passion for service, a strong interest in public health, and shared core values with the organization. As a result, I applied to the JRCOSTEP program. I was ecstatic when my preceptor, Dr. Amy Nham, notified me that I was selected to go to Fort Yuma Health Care Center (FYHC) of the Indian Health Service (IHS) as their COSTEP. I was excited to go to the IHS, given their reputation for exceptional patient care and the ability for pharmacists to practice at the top of their license. I began pouring myself into resources that describe the two populations of indigenous peoples that FYHC primarily serves, the Quechan Tribe and the Cocopah Tribe.

At FYHC, the pharmacy practiced at a level of care I had never seen before. The pharmacists verified medication orders and made alternative recommendations by checking drug interactions, lab values, antimicrobial stewardship, and guidelines. The pharmacy technicians were exceptional, and under the leadership of Dr. Maxon, I saw their scope of practice grow and their performance increase. Not only were they involved in ordering, filling, and working the counter, but they also provided vaccinations and helped with medication refills.

The pharmacy department was continually growing and expanding, even during the pandemic. The pharmacy already had established anticoagulation and hepatitis C clinics. I shadowed both clinics, and I was impressed by the level of care the pharmacists could provide patients with by using motivational interviewing and education to support patient empowerment. The department was also in the process of establishing a pain management clinic. My preceptor Dr. Nham was working on integrating pharmacists into the primary care clinics. She was the first pharmacist to be incorporated. I saw all the ways she contributed to the health care team just by being present. The pharmacists at FYHC were a critical part of the team. The providers trusted and sought their expertise and opinion in medication management.

As an intern, I felt like a valued member of the healthcare team. I counseled patients on various topics, provided vaccinations, and helped establish a procedure to increase vaccinations within the pharmacy. In the clinic, I worked on various impactful projects. With the antibiotic stewardship and GLP-1 agonist tracking projects, I worked with the pharmacists to make real-time care interventions to ensure optimal patient care. I suggested changes to the FYHC formulary, identified medications on the AGS BEER's list, suggested alternatives, and created alerts for providers. I worked with and presented to the interprofessional Pharmacy & Therapeutics (P&T) and pain management teams. I introduced a new pain management procedure that I helped develop. I also created several educational pamphlets for patients.

Dr. Nham supported my professional growth. She made time to talk to me about IHS residency programs and told me about her past experiences. She connected me to other USPHS service members. As a result, I had valuable and productive discussions about a career in the USPHS and IHS.

Dr. Nham ensured I had a well-rounded experience. She suggested I shadow Physical Therapy (PT), where I shadowed LT Michael DuBois. I was impressed by the impact of



Preceptor Dr. Amy Nham (left) with Isabella Hernandez (right) at Fort Yuma Health Care Center

## Di Qwa Tse Li I Yu S Di: “Like Family to Me”

Submitted by Victoria Fenton, PharmD Candidate 2022, Albany College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences

The journey from New York was long, but one audiobook, and many, many bluegrass radio stations later I arrived in Cherokee, North Carolina. I was greeted by the mist on the rolling hills of the Great Smoky Mountains and the rushing water of the Oconaluftee River, where some families played in the water and others patiently waited to feel a bite on their fishing poles. The beauty didn't cease when I arrived at the hospital, which had a waterfall and brightly colored flowers decorating the parking lot. Inside there were tall pillars branching like trees, paintings of animals and mountains covering the walls, and waiting room couches that flowed together like a river. The marbled floor contained images of animals from the Cherokee origin story, from the water beetle who dug up the mud and created land to the great buzzard whose strong wings created the mountains. Cherokee Indian Hospital (CIHA) has four guiding principles, and throughout my APPE rotation I saw the implementation of these principles woven through all my experiences.

*U wa shv u da nv te lv: “The one who helps you from the heart”*

The clinic is divided into different “pods,” each consisting of a physician, nurse, pharmacist, nutritionist, social worker, and other healthcare providers. Their desks are all located together to encourage conversation and collaboration. Each member of the team brought a different strength and perspective which complimented the others. The pods were started to ensure that patients would always see the same providers in the same location. This consistency allows the healthcare professionals to really get to know the patients and tailor healthcare to their individual needs. Teamwork and personal connections are key features that support care coming from the heart.

*To hi: “A state of peace and balance”*

CIHA is one of the few unique IHS sites that has their own inpatient psychiatric center, which is called Analenisgi (“they are beginning”). This is an 18-bed unit which helps patients with a variety of mental health concerns, including detox, depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, and many more. One of my most meaningful experiences was participating in group and seeing an aspect of care pharmacists often do not get to see. After Analenisgi, some patients go to CIHA's residential treatment center located in the mountains of the Snowbird community called Kanvwotiyi (“place where one is healed”). A focus on mental health is critical to ensure a state of peace and balance.

*Ni hi tsa tse li: “It belongs to you”*

Most pharmacists and pharmacy students are unfortunately familiar with how busy community pharmacies can be. In the chaos of the day sometimes counseling is pared down to simply asking if the patient has any questions, which we know isn't the most effective method. But at CIHA, where 1200 outpatient scripts are filled on average every day, every single patient is counseled on new medications and dose changes every single time. Whether it is in a counseling room, a phone call, or in the drive thru, the pharmacists at CIHA find creative ways to make



Cherokee COA Hiking Trip: (Left to Right) Victoria Fenton (P4, Albany College of Pharmacy) & family, Michael Burkett (P4, University of Rhode Island), LCDR Anthony Shelton, LT Catherine Dunton, LT Madison Pavlechko & family, LT Ashley Channels, CDR Eric Metterhausen & family

## Practicing Pharmacy in Prison

*Submitted by Grace Park, PharmD Candidate 2022, University of Missouri - Kansas City  
Preceptor: LT D.J. Flynn, PharmD, BCPS*

Over the month of September, I was fortunate enough to spend time at the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) in Springfield, Missouri as part of my Advanced Pharmacy Practice Experience (APPE). As a Springfield local, I knew that the Medical Center for Federal Prisoners (MCFP) is one of the most unique healthcare facilities in the area, if not in the nation. My goal for P4 year was to expose myself to as many new experiences as possible. Looking back, I can guarantee that this objective was met as everyday was filled with unforgettable experiences.

The Springfield MCFP offers medical services including dialysis, long-term care, and psychiatry. Additionally, the pharmacists provide services involving warfarin, hepatitis C, and HIV management. I shadowed pharmacists and various other healthcare providers in each of these areas. Every staff member I met was very welcoming to students, and I gained a lot from each provider's perspective.

As one of the largest dialysis centers in the BOP, there are numerous patients with varying levels of chronic kidney disease. I rounded with nephrologists, nurses, and the dietician dedicated to patient's on hemodialysis, peritoneal dialysis, or pre-dialysis. By witnessing first-hand how the machines work and what the patients experience, I realized how little school teaches you about dialysis. My knowledge on dialysis further solidified as I presented on this topic to BOP pharmacy staff. Dialysis is remarkably complicated, and I gained a new level of respect and understanding for both the patients undergoing dialysis and the providers treating them.

The long-term care unit accommodates patients with extensive medical histories. As well as rounding with the providers in charge, I participated in the weekly interdisciplinary team meetings. This team consisted of physicians, advanced practice providers, nurses, physical therapy, social work, dieticians, and pharmacists; and met to discuss each patient's care plan. The inmates themselves also had the opportunity to join in and talk about their priorities. Interestingly, providers knew some patients extremely well because they have been with them for years. One provider has known a certain inmate for over twenty years. This was one of the many eye-opening moments for me regarding care for incarcerated patients.

My time at the psychiatric unit offered more extraordinary opportunities. This unit houses many patients with severe psychiatric disorders. I sat in the same room with several patients diagnosed with various psychiatric conditions - bipolar, schizophrenia, and personality disorders to name a few - alongside the psychologists for their routine therapy sessions. During my rounds with the psychiatrist, I spoke first-hand to patients diagnosed with schizophrenia regarding their diagnosis and challenges. One patient even sang for us. There were so many more experiences that I wish I could share in this newsletter that have had an impact on me.



Left: Medical Center for Federal Prisoners in Springfield, MO  
Right: Grace Park, PharmD Candidate, Class of 2022

## Navigating APPEs in the Time of COVID-19 – Rosebud IHS Comprehensive Health Care Facility

Submitted by Clarissa-Cecile Wu and Shoghi Agbortoko  
Doctor of Pharmacy Candidates '21, MCPHS University, Boston, MA

After over a year of anticipation, APPE students from MCPHS University were struck with bad news: COVID-19 had brought the Navajo Nation to its knees, and as a result, every site had stopped all student rotations. Clarissa-Cecile Wu and Shoghi Agbortoko (PharmD Candidates '21) would have been the first students from MCPHS University to rotate with the Indian Health Service, and more specifically, with the Navajo Nation in over 10 years.

Not giving up hope, the students called a few more sites across the country and stumbled upon Rosebud Comprehensive Health Care Facility (RCHCF) – where pharmacist preceptor Dr. Jaleh Thranow was still precepting students. Dr. Thranow spoke with Chief Pharmacist CDR Inna Voinich, PharmD, BCPS and supervisor Dr. Madojutola Dawodu, and the team was more than happy to receive an additional 2 APPE students – 2 more than usual. Over the course of the next few months, Dr. Thranow worked tirelessly to ensure the contracts were signed, the paperwork completed, and housing provided. 1800 miles later, Clarissa and Shoghi left Boston, MA, camped in various parts of the country, and arrived at Rosebud Indian Reservation.

RCHCF, a 35-bed hospital, provides an array of opportunities for upcoming pharmacists. The pharmacy department currently has multiple clinical opportunities for pharmacists including the Naloxone, Anticoagulation and Oseltamivir outpatient clinics, antimicrobial stewardship program, and the pharmacokinetic inpatient and emergency medicine clinic. The department at present is expanding clinical opportunities and began implementing the Diabetes clinic with plans to re-initiate Hepatitis C clinic, develop hypertension, dyslipidemia, clozapine, and other clinics. In this case, Clarissa and Shoghi were exposed to both inpatient and outpatient pharmacy services offered at Rosebud. The students were able to round every morning with the multidisciplinary inpatient team, making therapeutic recommendations and thereby reducing adverse events and enhancing patient health outcomes. In their ambulatory care roles, the students worked under the supervision of the preceptor Dr. Thranow who runs the Anticoagulation clinic at RCHCF. The students reviewed data for every patient who visited the clinic and made modifications to their current anticoagulation therapies. In addition, Clarissa and Shoghi were able to participate in expanding the Anticoagulation Pharmacy-run Protocol by adding the anticoagulation bridging and anticoagulation conversions protocols, evaluated appropriateness of antibiotic prescribing patterns, and reviewed dosing for mechanically ventilated patients. Alongside inpatient rounding and co-staffing the anticoagulation clinic, the students had the opportunity to use their clinical



Caption (from left to right): Dr. Madojutola Dawodu, CDR Inna Voinich, Dr. Jaleh Thranow, Clarissa-Cecile Wu, Shoghi Agbortoko



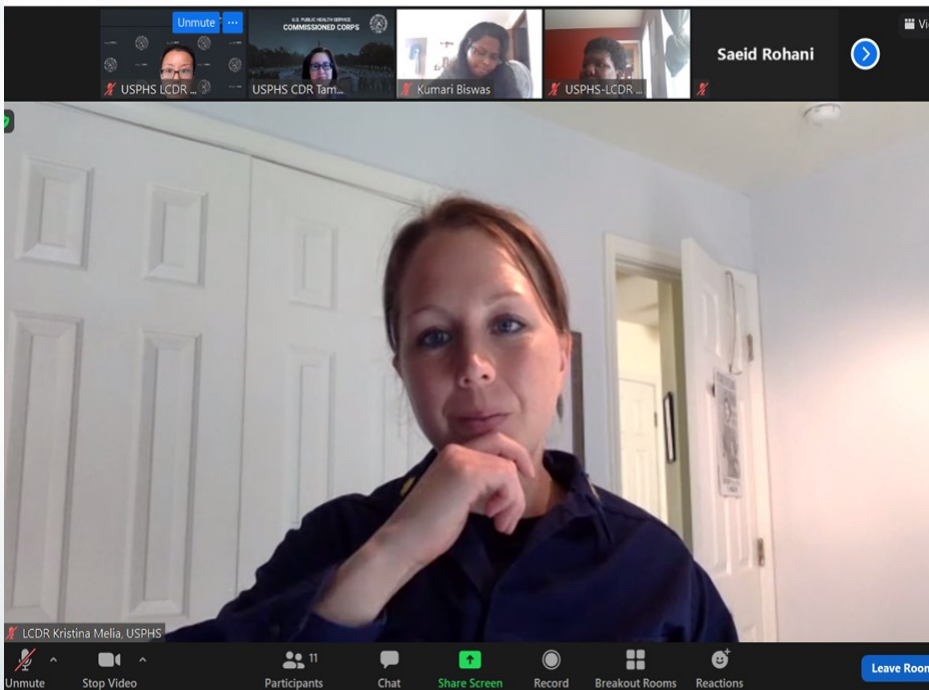
Fall/Winter 2021

## LECOM Virtual Career Day

Submitted by LCDR Yvon Yeo, PharmD, MPH, CPH

On July 7, 2021, four U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) officers – CDR Tamy Leung, LCDR Kristina Melia, LCDR Gladys Williams, and LCDR Yvon Yeo - participated in a virtual career day hosted by the Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine (LECOM) School of Pharmacy for pharmacy students in their last year of the three-year accelerated pathway pharmacy program on the Erie, Pennsylvania, campus. Despite a few technical glitches using Zoom (delays in joining the main Zoom meeting room and some officers unable to join the USPHS Zoom breakout room), we were appreciative to be given the opportunity to meet with pharmacy students and introduce them to the Commissioned Corps, as none of them had heard the USPHS. Combined, there were a total of approximately 80 recruiters and students who participated in the LECOM virtual career day. There were about 10 breakout rooms for recruiters from different sectors, ranging from retail to hospital and the uniformed services. The USPHS breakout room was visited by 15 students.

US PUBLIC LCDR Zoom Meeting



Top (L-R): LCDR Yvon Yeo, CDR Tamy Leung, LECOM pharmacy student Ms. Kumari Biswas, and LCDR Gladys Williams. Bottom: LCDR Kristina Melia.

USPHS recruitment materials housed in the **Officer Secure Area** under **Communication Tools and Resources** were procured for the recruiting event. Below are some resources for the event:

The USPHS virtual backdrop could be downloaded from the **Communication Tools and Resources** following the **U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps Virtual Conference Backdrop Instructions**. The background could be changed to the USPHS background while on Zoom.

Note: To change the background in Zoom, you must download the Zoom desktop application to join the meeting. You cannot access the USPHS backdrop in the browser version.

The **elevator speech** also found on this page provides a quick synopsis on USPHS – our history, who we are, what we do to advance and promote the health and safety of our nation, and some of the benefits to joining the service.

Using the **8 steps to become a U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps Public Health Service Officer** infographic, the students were made aware of the application process. In connection to seeking employment opportunities with federal agencies, we encouraged students to sign up for the PHS-RX-STUDENTS@LIST.NIH.GOV listserv so that they could receive information related to USPHS applications and more importantly, job opportunities in federal agencies.

As the group of us came from diverse federal agencies, CDR Leung gave an overview of her position at Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services and briefly touched on her previous work experience at Indian Health Service (IHS). LCDR Williams talked about her U.S. Food and Drug Administration project manager position and her past experience working at IHS. LCDR Melia

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## Empathy as a Universal Language

Submitted by Kelsey Briscese, Pharm.D Candidate 2022 & Jaelyn Hayman Pharm.D Candidate 2022  
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey – Ernest Mario School of Pharmacy

One of the most important attributes of a healthcare professional, alongside knowledge of course, is having the ability to empathize. Throughout our academic career at Ernest Mario School of Pharmacy, this point has been emphasized to us repeatedly. Empathy is so much more than sympathy because it is not only about being able to feel compassion towards another individual, but also about being able to emulate their emotions. Through empathy, a healthcare professional can truly understand what it is like to be in their patient's shoes, and thus provide the absolute best care. Unfortunately, it can become complicated empathizing with a patient when you do not understand their background, culture, or beliefs.

This rotation we were specifically drawn to due to our own personal backgrounds. For example, one of the author's grandma was a first-generation US American, emigrating from a quaint farm in Brazil. Being raised on a farm, she relied on natural herbs and plants for general health and wellness for the majority of her life. Thus, when she was diagnosed with cancer, she naturally preferred a more homeopathic approach and was hesitant to try "western" medications. Many healthcare professionals were unable to empathize with her desires and it made her feel misunderstood. Additionally, the other author is a first-generation U.S. American. She has family raised in a different country with a whole different type of healthcare system. The Indian Health Service (IHS) provided an opportunity to observe another approach to healthcare and to empathize with a unique community. This was why the chance to experience the IHS APPE rotation was so important to us.

We want to be able to provide the absolute best care to all of our patients in the future, and this rotation gave us an opportunity to further enhance our knowledge on how to do so. It is so important to have cultural competency because then you can empathize with your patient properly and jointly decide upon a personalized medication action plan that the patient will approve of, and they are more likely to stay compliant. Understanding how to effectively communicate to a patient can have a huge impact on their healthcare. For example, we learned throughout the rotation that in the Navajo community, when speaking of potential side effects, it is best to say that a "person might experience the following..." rather than saying "you might experience the following..." This simple change in wording could help a patient feel more comfortable with their treatment. We were able to immerse ourselves into the Navajo culture and understand their respect for other remedies of healthcare such as their "Medicine Man." By understanding their trust in other aspects of healthcare, we were able to come up with treatment plans that did not compromise their own beliefs and respected their culture. We found this to be so important in building a healthy patient-provider relationship.



Kelsey Briscese and Jaelyn Hayman

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## My Adventures as a Commissioned Corps Junior Officer

Submitted By: Mr. Andrew Trong Duong, Student Pharmacist

In the summer of 2021, in transition between my P2 and P3 pharmacy didactic years, I had the amazing opportunity to serve with the Junior Commissioned Officer Student Training and Externship Program (JrCOSTEP). I served as a Commissioned Corps Junior Officer at the Albuquerque Indian Health Center (AIHC). It is a high-volume ambulatory facility that has over 100,000 visits per year and averages 1300 prescriptions per day. Services included family practice, pediatrics, mental health, women's health, optometry, rheumatology, and preventative medicine. There was never a dull day at AIHC, every day was something new and brought in new opportunities for learning. Every week I had different assignments and rotational activities that included:

- Acute or Chronic Disease Topic Discussions
- Guideline Reviews
- Pharmacy Staffing
- Vaccine Clinics
- Patient SOAP Note and Case Presentation

Along with all my different assignments and rotational activities, I was also able to have different rotations every week. I was paired with a different pharmacist to shadow and discuss topics on diabetes, anticoagulation, hepatitis C, tobacco cessation, medication therapy management, PrEp, and immunizations. Through these rotations I was able to expose myself to different areas of medicine to expand my learning, not only to prepare for classes, but to prepare for the NAPLEX and my pharmacy career. As a rising P3, I was able to reinforce ideas as well as gain exposure to topics discussed in my therapeutics class in pharmacy school.



What was unique to my facility was the ambulatory experience I was able to obtain. With the amazing team of pharmacists and staff here at AIHC I helped run clinics to help manage disease states that included anticoagulation, tobacco cessation, medication reconciliation, and hepatitis C. I was also fortunate enough to travel to off-site clinic areas that included the Zia and Santa Ana Indian reservations. I interacted with patients on a professional level to optimize therapy and educated patients on topics to improve their quality of life.

Here at AIHC, I developed personally and professionally too. I was able to strengthen my public speaking skills and critical thinking through journal clubs, drug information questions, and topic presentations. Many journal clubs focused on diabetic treatment for weight loss, while drug information questions ranged from anticoagulation recommendations to diuretic interventions. Ultimately, my final project of my internship was to prepare an on-site presentation to the Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committee on continuous glucose monitoring. In addition to all the onsite projects I accomplished, I also created infographics on diabetes and warfarin therapy to be used in the facility as references for counseling and clinic guides.

My position over the summer showed me the vast scope of practice a pharmacist covers, and I admire the accessibility it provides to patients. My mission has always been aimed towards better healthcare and unity across the world. The Public Health Service combined the two things I love. My internship as the JrCOSTEP solidified my idea to pursue a career as an ambulatory pharmacist. It has inspired me to pursue a career in the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps and my application for the SrCOSTEP is currently pending.

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## JRCOSTEP at the Phoenix Indian Medical Center

Submitted by ENS Han Le, PharmD candidate 2023 and ENS Madeline Gemoules, PharmD candidate 2023

Preceptor: CDR Jing Li, PharmD,

What happens when you uproot one Mid-West and one East Coast pharmacy student and place them in Phoenix, Arizona for a summer externship? You bond over the scorching heat and the surreal experience that you've found yourself in.

The Junior Commissioned Officer Student Training and Externship Program (JRCOSTEP) allowed us to spend two months (or three months in Han's case), working as pharmacy student commissioned officers at the Phoenix Indian Medical Center (PIMC). With the help of our preceptor, CDR Jing Li, we were able to experience a variety of opportunities and get involved in several projects during our summer.



Left to Right: Madeline Gemoules (PharmD '23), CDR Jing Li, Han Le (PharmD '23)

One of our first projects was working with the Sage Clinic, a primary care clinic focused on patients with HIV and Hepatitis C, identifying and educating at-risk patients on HIV prevention and pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP). With the help of the exceptional Sage Clinic pharmacy team, we were able to assist multiple patients starting or resuming PrEP services.

One of the highlights of the JRCOSTEP experience was being able to work on independent projects. While rotating through the Pediatric Clinic, Han had the opportunity to complete an analysis of Augmentin ES-600 and advocate for its addition onto the PIMC formulary. The write-up was presented at the June Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committee (P&T) meeting and voted in favor of addition to the formulary.

Madeline had the opportunity to work with the Behavioral Health Department in working towards the addition of an indication to the medical center formulary. Several patients were using Vivitrol for treatment of alcohol dependence, but behavioral health needed special approval each time they prescribed the medication for that indication. She was able to help draft and finalize the justification document before the next P&T committee meeting, where the new indication was presented for consideration.

We also had the opportunity to practice our presentation skills by each leading a Journal Club discussion and wrapping up our externship with a final presentation. Han's final presentation focused on the use of continuous glucose monitors in type one diabetes, and Madeline reviewed the most recent clinical guidelines for acute alcohol withdrawal syndrome.

Our time in Phoenix forced us out of our comfort zones, and landed us in a space where we could envision our future careers as pharmacists. It was exciting to apply what we had learned in the classroom to such a wide variety of situations, and it solidified our interest in pursuing a career working with the US Public Health Service.

We wanted to thank our preceptor CDR Jing Li for allowing us to learn from her and the other pharmacists at PIMC as well as pushing us to go beyond just being pharmacy students.

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## Ambulatory Care with the IHS in Pine Hill, New Mexico

Submitted by Roshni Pattabiraman and Nauka Bhalodia, Student Pharmacists

Working with the Indian Health Service and the United States Public Health Service is an incredibly rewarding and eye-opening experience. It exposes you to all the inequalities that exist in accessing healthcare, and the limitation of resources that are available to certain populations. The Native American population is particularly disadvantaged due to the isolation of the reservations and the distance from large medical centers that provide multiple services. The majority of the population at Pine Hill is Navajo and the clinic serves about 6,500 people in the surrounding area. The most prevalent disease states in this patient population include diabetes, hypertension, obesity, rheumatoid arthritis, psychiatric illnesses, and alcohol abuse.

The Pine Hill Health Center is known as Tł'ohchiní Diné'é Bee Azee'ilíní in Navajo, which translates to "the place where the onion people make medicine." It is a robust medical facility with many services including primary care, dental care, nursing, a lab, and a pharmacy. The environment of the clinic is very interprofessional and involves interaction between all of the clinicians in order to provide seamless patient care. The pharmacy is able to communicate directly with the providers in order to provide recommendations that impact medication choices. As a Federally Qualified Health Center, the pharmacy has access to most medications that would be seen at an outpatient pharmacy. The formulary largely consists of medications that are utilized based on the prevalent disease states within the population, but they are also able to order other medications as needed through a major distributor.

As patient advocates and future pharmacists, our main role is to ensure that patients are properly counseled on the medications that they are receiving and educated on the reason why they are taking the medications. Adherence is the most common issue where healthcare providers can come into play. When addressing these issues, it is important to understand the patient's individual beliefs before adding on recommendations that they may not fully comprehend. As providers, it is our initial instinct to jump to providing guideline-based recommendations; however, this rotation has taught us that is not always the most effective or appropriate response if the patient is not willing to accept those changes. Instead, we have learned to tailor our recommendations to what the patient will be receptive to, and to adjust how we communicate. By making these changes, we can establish a strong foundation for a therapeutic relationship that extends beyond our cultural and linguistic differences and allows us to work as a team.

Ultimately, we both value our experience here in Pine Hill greatly; we are hopeful to take what we have learned here and apply it in other patient care settings. The common theme of being open to different perspectives about health care, that we have seen throughout our time here, is a lesson that we are eager to take with us in our future endeavors. We highly recommend doing a rotation with the IHS and would request that students who do so come into this experience with an open mind, enthusiasm to learn, and a willingness to adapt.



Presented (left to right) in the Pine Hill Health Center Pharmacy are Siamak Mollei, PharmD, Kristi Martine, PharmD, Shirley Tsosie, Pharmacy Technician, Wrenda Pino, Lead Technician.



## Returning to the 49th

Submitted by Murphy Affolder, 2021 Pharm D. Candidate, St. Louis College of Pharmacy  
 Preceptor: CDR Anne Marie Bott, PharmD, BCPS, BCOP  
 Commander, USPHS Commissioned Corps

Raised as an Army brat, I have had the opportunity to live in 11 different states and travel through all 50 states by my 24<sup>th</sup> birthday. When picking rotations, numerous friends raved about the Alaska Native Medical Center (ANMC), but I didn't need their convincing. I had previously lived in Anchorage when I was in middle school and knew of all the exciting opportunities that the 49<sup>th</sup> state has to offer. I was ecstatic when my best friend, Wynston (who is also a pharmacy student), also got accepted to come to ANMC at the same!



Murphy Affolder hiking in Seward, Alaska

I was a little nervous the Monday my rotation started, since I do not have plans to work in an oncology pharmacy and didn't remember much of what I was taught about oncology in school. However, the anxiety quickly went away after meeting CDR Anne Marie Bott and the team. I was quickly brought up to speed on the daily operations and my role in the team. Everyone in the infusion pharmacy was kind, they did their best to show me interesting patients and get my thoughts on what the best care plan would be.

On a daily basis, I reviewed chemotherapy orders, verified regimens using the National Comprehensive Cancer Network Guidelines, counseled patients, and assisted with the workflow. My favorite part of the rotation was counseling patients on their home medications. Whether it was getting to talk to patients finishing their last round of chemo, or to a patient and their family that were on their first round, it was always a pleasure. I also enjoyed topic discussions with the resident and different pharmacists. After each topic discussion, I would go look at the order set of patients who had that disease and apply my knowledge, which provided a hands on learning experience. Working in the infusion pharmacy allowed me to learn about medications that I had never seen or used before and gave me a much better understanding of what oncology pharmacy is.

During my free time, I was able to show Wynston all of my favorite spots. We were able to spend the first weekend in Seward, where we hiked Cane's Head trail and even had a group of sea lions follow us on the beach. The second weekend I was able to meet up with an old friend and catch halibut! Overall, Alaska is an amazing state for exploration and the oncology rotation at ANMC is a wonderful learning experience.



UNIVERSITY OF  
 HEALTH SCIENCES  
 & PHARMACY  
 in St. Louis

ST. LOUIS COLLEGE OF PHARMACY

## Hiking Mountains at a Glacial Pace

Submitted by Rachel Silver, Pharm.D. Candidate 2022, St. Louis College of Pharmacy at UHSP

Preceptor: CAPT Anne Marie Bott, Pharm.D., BCPS, BCOP

I remember the moment I got the email. A notification buzzed from my phone and the subject of the email, in all caps, read “congratulations, you’re going to beautiful Alaska!” The next couple of hours afterwards were a complete blur. Telling family and friends that I get to travel 3,700 miles from home was not only shocking to them, but for me as well. I was incredibly nervous to hop on a plane by myself, but my excitement for the trip overshadowed the fear.



**ST. LOUIS COLLEGE**  
of PHARMACY

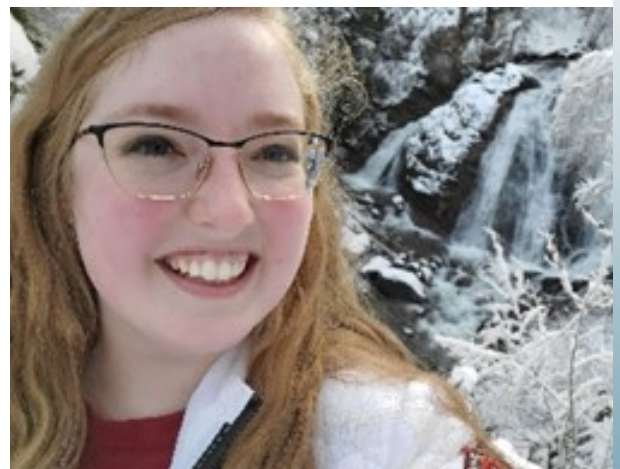
EST. 1864

The Alaska Native Medical Center (ANMC) is an expansive and gorgeous campus. I consider myself incredibly lucky that I get one of the best views of the Chugach mountain range while I’m at lunch. My five-week rotation has been at the Infusion Pharmacy in the Healthy Communities Building. I focus my time on reviewing patient chemotherapy orders and counseling on home medications. When I’m not doing that, I focus my time on completing projects. I have the opportunity to write articles for UPOC and Alaska Pharmacists Association to educate others on what I have been able to do and learn while here on rotation. I also help out the institution by performing research and analyzing the best treatment options based on cost-effectiveness, safety profile, and clinical impact.

Counseling patients at the infusion center has been beneficial in the development of my interpersonal skills. I have been able to work with patients one-on-one without interruption, which has not been the case for me when I counsel patients at my retail job back home. Having the proper time and space to counsel patients makes all of the difference. I can see how patients react to what I’m saying, and I have the ability and time to make sure I am phrasing what they need to know in a way the patient understands it best. This rotation has helped me “go back to my roots” in a sense because of how I get to review the basics and truly see how pharmacists are an integral part of the healthcare team.

As much as I’m enjoying my rotation during the week, I really look forward to the weekends because that’s when I get to explore. I have the luxury of getting 5 whole weekends to see this beautiful state, and I’m not letting it go to waste. So far, I’ve been down to Seward to see Resurrection Bay, I’ve seen the animals at the Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center, I’ve hiked Kincaid park (the trail named Good Greeff was not kidding!), and I’ve completed a 2 hour trek on the Matanuska Glacier. Nothing has stopped me from seeing everything I want. I’ve even hiked in the rain and ice to see Byron Glacier—without shoe crimps. There’s so much of the state to see, and I intend to see as much as possible.

If you ever get a chance to apply for a rotation here at ANMC, I would highly recommend it. It has been wondrous to see how members in the Public Health Service (PHS) come together and deliver optimal care for patients. Everyone here has the same notion in mind: the patient is the number one priority. As a student witnessing this for myself, I feel inspired in my love for helping others and my career. If you’re considering a career in PHS, I can honestly say that I’ve never met a happier group of pharmacists who love their jobs and their patients. There are plenty of patients in underserved communities who need our help and expertise.



A “selfie” of the author at Barbara Falls

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## How Pharmacists Are Forming Provider-Patient Relationships

*Submitted by Ms. Gianna Emmett, Student Pharmacist*

In October, I had the pleasure of traveling from Pittsburgh to complete one of my 5-week APPE rotations through the Tuba City Regional Health Care Corporation (TCRHCC) Indian Health Services (IHS) in Tuba City, AZ. The transition from an abundance of healthcare resources in Pittsburgh to limited access to healthcare in a remote area was eye-opening.

Great efforts are made by all areas of the health system to mitigate patient care challenges. Patients' appointments for different services are scheduled on the same day, eliminating the worry of arranging frequent transportation. TCRHCC also offers a Mobile Medical service, where a fully equipped RV drives out to surrounding isolated communities to bring health care services to its residents. I was able to accompany the Mobile Medical team to Kaibeto to assist with vaccines and pharmacy-related questions, which was an enriching experience. The Mobile Medical service is an important resource that allows patients to have intermittent medical concerns addressed without having to worry about travel and time that comes with making an appointment in Tuba City. Cost of care and for medications is often an obstacle for patients; however, IHS beneficiaries receive services and medications for free. Formulary medications are limited and may require providers to adjust their initial treatment strategies, but non-formulary medications can be obtained for patients when needed.

Pharmacists play a large role in outpatient care, running both diabetes and anticoagulation clinics. In both clinics, pharmacists are able to utilize clinical judgement to make adjustments to therapy. Most commonly, pharmacists will use monitoring parameters such as fasting blood glucose, A1c, or INR to guide their recommendations for further insulin or Warfarin therapy. Pharmacists also play a crucial role in vaccinating. TCRHCC offers many dates for vaccine clinics, mainly for COVID-19 vaccines and flu vaccines; patients can inquire about and receive other vaccines at the outpatient pharmacy.

Rather than services provided, I think the biggest role that pharmacists are able to play within this healthcare system is their ability to form longitudinal patient-provider relationships. The outpatient clinics allow pharmacists to see the same patients over time to monitor their progress. Creating a positive rapport with a patient fosters trust and understanding, which can be influencing factors in facilitating positive health outcomes. Knowing the patient and what motivates them will help with collaborative decision making when setting patient-centered goals. It is rewarding to connect with the patient and offer them personalized solutions to their unique problems. I hope to continue to see pharmacists fill this role, and I look forward to my opportunity to do so as well.



Gianna Emmett, Fourth Year Pharmacy Student





Fall/Winter 2021

## Northern Navajo Medical Center JRCOSTEP Experience

Submitted by ENS Trang Nguyen, Preceptor LCDR Sophia Yang

I came to the United States as an immigrant from Vietnam when I was 21 years old. In pursuit of the American dream, I studied and worked extremely hard. More than that, I've been a source of hope and spiritual support for my parents and strive to set an example for my younger sister. Since relocating to the United States, I've faced many obstacles and challenges and have overcome them due to my tenacity and resilience. Notwithstanding, I continue to seek opportunities that challenge me every day to be better than before. This led me to apply for the JRCOSTEP position with the Indian Health Service (IHS) after getting notified about this opportunity from my school advisors. Initially, I was anxious as I was not very knowledgeable about the Public Health Service (PHS) or Native American culture. However, my primary preceptor, LCDR Sophia Yang, reassured me that I should still apply for this program as I researched about PHS and Indian culture. My preceptor has been very supportive throughout my tour as a JRCOSTEP in Shiprock, New Mexico.

During my first few days at Northern Navajo Medical Center (NNMC), I realized why I had decided to complete a rotation there. I met with some of the nicest people who were also very welcoming, especially my secondary preceptor, Dr. Tony Quaste.

Spending eight weeks at NNMC exposed me to a variety of experiences within the pharmacy field. I was able to build my confidence and communication skills during outpatient counseling, inpatient discharge counseling, and educating the pharmacists regarding a new formulary addition, Semaglutide. One of my fears is public speaking, but through multiple presentations and actively seeking honest feedback from preceptors at the site, I was able to improve my weaknesses. Even though I still feel nervous when I present, now I know how to better deal with nervousness, and I learned strategies to get more attention from the audience during my presentations. I also had the opportunity to practice interviewing patients in pharmacist-run clinics. The PGY2 residents taught me practical ways to interview a patient and how to write a good SOAP note. Leading a group discussion with APPE students and preceptors helped me develop my critical thinking and confidence. The lessons I gained from this activity are important as I try to improve my leadership skills. I also appreciated working in the inpatient setting where I learned antibiotic dosing calculations, inventory processes, and how the P&T committee functions.

Outside of the hospital, I enjoyed fun times with people in the pharmacy. I quickly became acclimated to the people and environment and attended a student/spring social event, a spontaneous trip to Durango, and a movie night on the lawn with coworkers. Furthermore, I was able to learn more about the people I worked closely with, and we became like family. For me, this externship was an excellent opportunity to learn, network, and explore a new spiritual culture and a colorful mountain land, New Mexico.



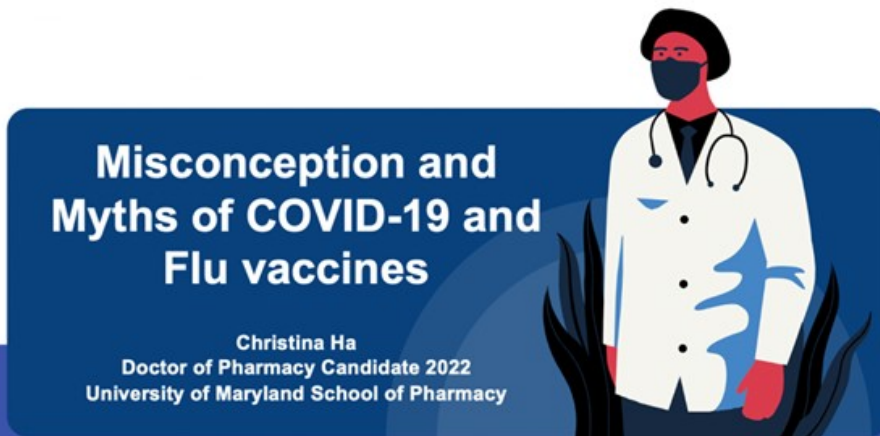
LCDR Sophia Yang and ENS Trang Nguyen in the atrium of the Northern Navajo Medical Center in Shiprock, NM.

Fall/Winter 2021

## Pharmacy Student APPE rotation at the FDA: Community Outreach presentation of COVID-19 and influenza vaccination to the Korean community

*Submitted by* Christina Ha, PharmD, Candidate of 2022; Preceptor: LT Sylvia Park, PharmD., YooJin Moon, PharmD.

Hello. My name is Christina Ha, and I am a 4<sup>th</sup> year student at University of Maryland School of Pharmacy. Ever since I started pharmacy school, I have always aspired to becoming a pharmacist working with the FDA. This APPE rotation at the FDA provided another step toward my passion as a pharmacist who wants to make an impact on population health.



In September 2021, I started my 5-week rotation at the Department of Bioequivalence within the Office of Generic Drugs at the FDA. I had opportunities to participate in various projects, network with pharmacists and other medical professionals in the different offices within the Center for Drug Evaluation and Research (CDER), and attend series of student lectures learning about critical public health tasks that are done to ensure that safe and effective

drugs are available to US residents. As a bilingual student pharmacist, I had a unique opportunity to present to the Korean immigrants in the Washington, D.C. and Maryland regions who receive limited health information due to language barriers. This health promotion event was requested by the Korean American community to debunk common myths and misconception of 2021-2022 influenza vaccinations and the COVID-19 vaccination and spread accurate information. The presentation was delivered in Korean and included an informational presentation and a question and answer session. This event was designed to empower the elderly in health management and to improve health literacy in a language that the patients can best understand. The presentation emphasized the importance of receiving both vaccinations to prevent the “twindemic,” the combined threat of COVID-19 and influenza. The presentation was composed of 10 common myths and misconceptions of each vaccine, and the corresponding facts for each misconception. The presentation also introduced the possible influenza vaccines available on the market, and most recent updates for the COVID-19 booster vaccination. Even though the presentation was all virtual, the audience was very engaged in asking questions. The audience expressed that they were encouraged to understand and manage their health.

It was a rewarding experience where I could directly help and provide information to the people in the community. I believe such community outreach experiences could serve to continue of trusted relationships among pharmacists and the local Korean community.

It was enlightening to meet numerous FDA scientists and to learn about the great lengths they are going through to keep the public safe.

My experience at the FDA as a pharmacy student truly sparked my passion to serve within the FDA. I am grateful for the experiences that will make me a better pharmacist and look forward to reaching my ultimate goal as a pharmacist working with the FDA with focuses on advocating public health.



## A Month with ACOMS

*Submitted by Brooke Kulusich*

In October, I had the opportunity to complete an advanced pharmacy practice rotation with the Advisory Committee Oversight and Management Staff (ACOMS), Office of the Chief Scientist, Office of the Commissioner at the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). My preceptor, LCDR Ashlee Januszewicz, PharmD, RAC and her team are responsible for supporting the FDA's 31 expert committees that convene as needed to advise the FDA on scientific, technical, and policy matters. The committees were established to provide guidance in support of the FDA's mission of protecting and promoting the public health, while adhering to the requirements set forth in the Federal Advisory Committee Act. On rotation, I had the opportunity to observe six advisory committee meetings. For example, I attended the Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee meeting where external experts reviewed safety and efficacy data before voting in favor of amending the Emergency Use Authorization for Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine for use in children 5 through 11 years of age. Attending these meetings gave me the opportunity to see the advisory committees in action and make connections to the policies and regulations I have learned throughout the rotation.

My time with ACOMS employees has provided me with a deeper insight on their specific roles, such as regulatory counsels, who mitigate committee member conflicts of interest, or committee management officers, who direct yearly reporting and charter renewals. Throughout my rotation, I had many opportunities to meet one-on-one with various individuals throughout FDA as well as pharmacists in other government agencies, including Indian Health Services (IHS) learning about the different positions pharmacists hold in Alaska. Knowing my potential interest in pursuing law school after pharmacy school, my preceptor connected me with five colleagues who had obtained this dual degree, who were glad to share their career paths with me.

Over several weeks, I have been working on a longitudinal project that evaluates the association between advisory committee recommendations and final FDA actions. After recent instances of disagreement between an advisory committee recommendation and FDA action made national news, the idea for my project was born. ACOMS felt it would be beneficial to analyze voting information from past years to gain additional perspective. I analyzed publicly available meeting materials and voting results from 173 committee meetings over a three-year period. I found that the FDA did not follow the advice of its committees about 20% of the time. These instances of discordance were most common when the committee was voting on initial approvals concerning drug products. At the end of my rotation, I had the opportunity to present my findings to an FDA-wide audience of 16 individuals.

Overall, my rotation with the FDA has been an incredible learning experience with countless opportunities to tailor my experience toward my interests in management and pharmacy law. I was afforded the chance to take ownership of a longitudinal project, build relationships with FDA staff, and learn more about how my pharmacy education can be applied in nontraditional ways to advance public health.



Fall/Winter 2021

## A Virtual, Yet Valuable, FDA Advance Pharmacy Practice Experience

*Submitted by Ms. Briana Kowal, Pharm.D. Candidate 2022*

*Preceptors: LCDR Tramara Dam, Pharm.D., RPh., GWCPM and Tri Le, Pharm.D.*

Despite the social distance, this rotation has not prevented me from having opportunities to engage with FDA professionals across various offices and students from all over the country. Everyone I met graciously shared their expertise and made me feel welcomed. I had the pleasure of working in the Center for Drug Evaluation and Research (CDER) Office of Management and Office of Compliance. My preceptors, LCDR Tramara Dam and Dr. Tri Le, have set me up for success by giving me direction and advice, yet allowed me to complete projects independently. My main takeaway from my project has led to an appreciation for how much work goes into optimizing drug safety, starting from pre-approval, and continuing during post-marketing of the drug. The ability to attend lectures that are specifically designed with student pharmacists in mind has provided a comprehensive overview of the FDA and their involvement with drug approval, medication safety, adverse events, and efficacy analysis.

It seems that the pandemic has not slowed the FDA down, but only amplified collaboration among the different offices to prevent shortages, authorize the emergency use of drugs, and communicate with the public, in addition to other responsibilities. My final presentation was on the use of monoclonal antibodies for the treatment of COVID-19. Having seen firsthand the increased use of these drugs during my emergency medicine rotation, I have gained a greater appreciation for understanding their pharmacology and the importance of evaluating their efficacy.

This experience has given me a deeper understanding on how therapeutic knowledge and skills gained in pharmacy school can be applied to non-traditional FDA pharmacy roles, to help aid in decision making on a national level. I would highly recommend this rotation for any pharmacy students, even those who are interested in health system or community pharmacy, because the skills and knowledge I gained are valuable in any type of pharmacy career.



Ms. Briana Kowal, Pharm.D. Candidate 2022, University of Michigan

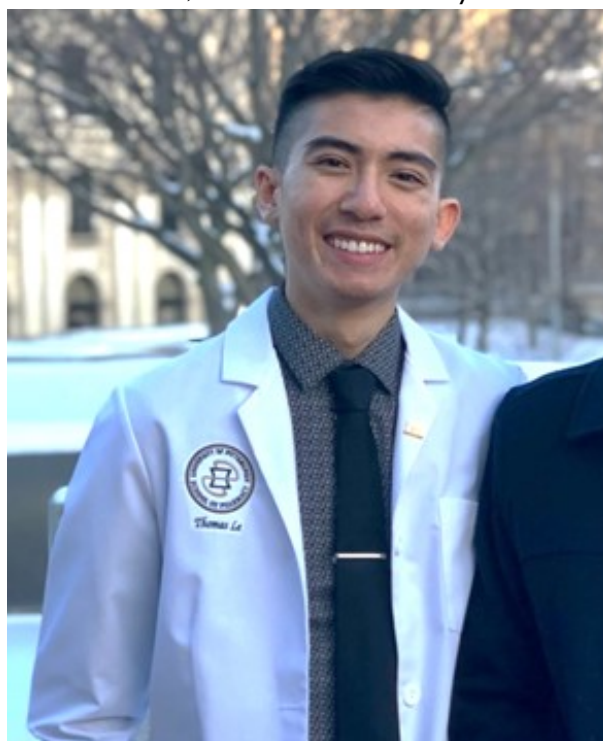
## An Essential Experience for Prospective Pharmacists

*Submitted by Thomas Le, PharmD Candidate, Class of 2022*

After a weekend long, 30-hour drive through the Midwest, making several stops at gas stations, my friend and I arrived in Tuba City on a Sunday afternoon. To put it succinctly, my experience at Tuba City Regional Health Care Corporation (TCRHCC) was well worth the drive and transcended my expectations. After completing rotations in New York City and Seattle, I came to appreciate how a seemingly remote health system could be so diverse in its services and provide holistic care to the surrounding, indigenous community. When I drove through the town and consciously observed the landscape, infrastructure, and available resources, I immediately recognized that social determinants of health greatly impact the community. Cultural and historical contexts are also tacit influences on the delivery and outcomes of health services at TCRHCC, such as the role of traditional medicine prior to seeking Western treatments, and children acting as interpreters for their parents, which also evoked memories of when I had to do the same for my parents.

Considering the shortage of providers in the region and socioeconomics of the population, providing patient-centered, interdisciplinary, and resource-conscious healthcare is intricate, yet essential, to improving the lives of this community. This is evident through the expanded roles of pharmacists in the outpatient clinics. Available pharmacist-run services include diabetes, warfarin, vaccination, and pain clinics. After observing and which lead to appointments at these clinics, my perspective on the value of pharmacists as providers was reinforced. Patients were always welcoming, leading to positive interactions, casual conversations, and some cultural learning. Additionally, I shadowed family, internal, and pediatric physicians, offering opportunities to provide drug information, recommendations, and counseling. For instance, I performed discharge counseling for a patient about naltrexone and Narcan® administration.

I recommend prospective pharmacists to consider a rotation at an IHS facility. It is a rewarding and inspirational experience to see the motivation and dedication of IHS and Public Health Service pharmacists to improving the lives of underserved communities – that every effort is made across all healthcare professionals to address patients' unmet needs, even when the necessary resources are not available. Specifically, TCRHCC is affiliated with other clinics, such as Sacred Peaks in Flagstaff, AZ and LeChee Health Facility in Page, AZ, providing further outreach to patients who may not have the available means to receive care at either facility. Students will consider approaching patient interactions more attentively, understanding the interplay of scarce resources and culturally sensitive healthcare. Overall, expanded roles of pharmacists make this site unique. Hopefully soon, provider status will be attained, where pharmacists will be recognized for their part in implementing innovative clinical roles into pharmacy practice.



Thomas Le, fourth-year student pharmacist

## **Providing Pharmacy Services ... continued from [page 4](#)**

Furthermore, I was able to enhance my pharmacy skills by performing many patient care tasks, such as monthly assessments of inmates on the inpatient wards, assessing non-formulary requests, performing medication reconciliations when inmates return from an outside hospital, attending multidisciplinary meetings, and patient education. Additionally, I had the opportunity to assist with pharmacy informatics, helping input data and updating existing profiles for the Hepatitis C treatment surveillance database. I also participated in antibiotic stewardship activities by surveying fluoroquinolone usage and assessed its appropriateness. These were all exceptional opportunities for me to familiarize myself with some of the administrative aspects of pharmacy.

Finally, my major project for this APPE rotation involved educating the providers about establishing an Opioid Treatment Program at FMC Lexington. I attended planning meetings and worked closely with the Program Director. I developed an educational Power-Point presentation with a companion pamphlet to help providers learn more about how the OTP will provide treatment to inmates and some of the logistics on the upcoming changes.

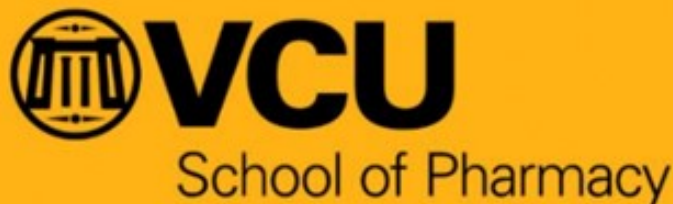
As I come to the end of my pharmacy student journey, I look back on many fond memories, and my experience at this rotation was no exception. This time at FMC Lexington has been so formative in who I want to become as a pharmacist that I am inspired to seek employment through the United States Public Health Service. My love for serving the underserved has only grown, and I feel called to provide care and compassion to the people of this country. Whether on a military base, a Native American reservation, or behind prison walls, I hope to join the ranks as a Public Health pharmacist providing exceptional health care to the people of our great nation.

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## **My inpatient Experience at Alaska Native Medical Center ... continued from [page 6](#)**

American culture and wildlife through the different places I visited. At the ANMC main hospital, walkways and stairs are adorned in Alaska native art and crafts, each with descriptions of their respective histories to provide visitors with insight into their storied culture.

I am extremely grateful for everyone who made my rotation at ANMC possible and enjoyable. ANMC has given me the opportunity to learn and provide for an underserved community. I will take all that I have learned thus far about Alaskan Natives and the Indian Health System and continue to build on my knowledge and clinical skills that I gained in this rotation throughout my career. Thank you!



Fall/Winter 2021

**An Enriching Virtual Rotation ... continue from [page 3](#)**

Manufacturing Quality (OMQ) and the Policy and Operations Branch (POB). I learned the process behind regulatory decision-making around manufacturing, Current Good Manufacturing Practice (CGMP), warning letters, drug shortages, and much more. Furthermore, I was able to incorporate CGMP regulations for my final presentation on nitrosamine. If there were subjects that I was interested in learning more about, the Agency had the resources for me to build upon my knowledge. One advice I would give for future students is to not be afraid to acknowledge and research your area of interests.

My rotation at the FDA was insightful and unique. I learned how the Agency utilizes the regulatory process to protect public health. It was eye opening to see the different roles pharmacists had in the Agency. The five weeks at the Agency passed by quickly, but the knowledge I gained from my rotation will be with me throughout my career.



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**Alaska 2021 ... continue from [page 10](#)**

views all over the state are absolutely breathtaking! Denali was like nothing I have ever seen before. In Seward, we went sea kayaking and saw many sea otters and even saw a pod of orcas! We also took a trip on the Kenai Fjords Tour to see the Holgate Glacier, and had the opportunity to watch humpback whales swim by and Steller sea lions sun bathing.

This whole adventure has truly been a once in a lifetime experience. I am so thankful for the opportunity to have spent 5 weeks expanding my knowledge in my area of interest in pharmacy, as well as getting to explore such a spectacularly breathtaking state!



Fall/Winter 2021

### **An incredible JRCOSTEP Experience at Fort Yuma ... continue from [page 13](#)**

one PT session. I also worked with the Public Health Nursing team to help support vaccinations at outreach events and help bridge the gap of care. During outreach events, Dr. Nham encouraged me to explore cultural aspects and visit the Cocopah Museum.

During my experience, I was able to experience a sense of community and fulfill my love for travel. The Pharmacy department had bi-weekly social gatherings with the Physical Therapy department outside of work. The location of Yuma allowed me to go sight-seeing on the weekends.

I am grateful for the JRCOSTEP experience at FYHC because it allowed me to learn and grow while making valuable contributions. In addition, I feel honored to have served the Quechan and Cocopah tribes. Overall, I loved my experience. In the future, I hope to practice pharmacy at the top of my license as a valued member of an interprofessional team as pharmacists do at FYHC.



### **Di Qwa Tse Li I Yu S Di ... continue from [page 14](#)**

sure patients are armed with the education they need to take responsibility of their own healthcare. Their healthcare belongs to them, and it is our job to empower them with education.

*Di qwa tse li I yu s di: "Like family to me"*

I spent my first week in an anticoagulation and smoking cessation clinic. The pharmacist knew everyone's story. She knew all about their family, what makes them laugh, and what hardships they overcame. She knew that one patient was having a hard time quitting smoking because all the women in her family smoked together on the porch. Another was having a hard time controlling their INR in the spring and summer because that is when sochan, a popular green in Cherokee, is harvested. We saw a patient who normally has "white coat syndrome," but her a blood pressure reading was normal because she felt so comfortable. The patients were like family to the pharmacist, and she was like family to them. Out of all the principles, this is the one that will always resonate with me when I look back fondly at my experience at CIHA.





Fall/Winter 2021

## Practicing Pharmacy in Prison... continue from [page 15](#)

Beyond the clinical experiences, there were many prison-exclusive experiences I will not forget. The food for correctional workers is cooked by inmates, and I got to try some of their menu. The Paws for Cause canine training unit also pleasantly surprised me: the inmates trained puppies to become therapy dogs. This program is highly sought-after amongst inmates. That was probably one of my favorite surprises in prison.

Overall, I highly recommend the rotation offered at the Springfield MCFP for fellow pharmacy students. It is an experience that you will likely never get in a typical healthcare setting. The staff here enjoy students, and I encourage you to reach out to LT D.J. Flynn (dlflynn@bop.gov) for additional information about this rotation!



## Navigating APPEs ... continue from [page 16](#)

knowledge to counsel patients picking prescriptions for the first time. The numerous projects completed included creating a phenobarbital protocol for alcohol withdrawal in the ED, piloting a transitions of care service between the case management department and pharmacy, making antimicrobial stewardship recommendations for callback cultures, and more. They were "... more than thrilled to be part of a very diverse pharmacy experience". Seldom do students partake in projects and protocol composition that have a long lasting effect on the hospital, but at RCHCF – with the guidance of a highly experienced clinical team – these students were able to do just that.

COVID-19 has presented challenging times for everyone, and in the context of pharmacy learning, APPE rotations have largely taken on a virtual setting. It is only through safe practices and the graciousness of the Rosebud pharmacy team that Clarissa and Shoghi have been able to experience serving the Lakota-Sioux population. Much of the Rosebud staff are very warm and welcoming, and the students learned more about the community through the numerous conversations with various departments. In addition, Dr. Voinich and Dr. Dawodu's accessibility to students allowed for student growth and guidance.

RCHCF's strength lies in its management team's ability to create psychologically safe spaces for employees and students, despite the high volume of prescriptions and demanding nature of the job. Pharmacy students looking to work in remote and underserved populations have infinite opportunities to apply clinical skills beyond the typical pharmacist's scope of practice. Thank you Rosebud, for an unforgettable experience!



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## **LECOM Virtual Career Day... continue from [page 17](#)**

shared her experience as a clinical pharmacist in U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Health Service Corps (IHSC). I discussed my role as a communications specialist at IHSC and my previous jobs as a chief pharmacist and staff pharmacist in the Federal Bureau of Prisons.

In addition, we talked about the different benefits of working in the uniformed services: medical, dental, and vision benefits; life insurance; 30-day annual leave starting the first year of active duty; not needing a pharmacy residency or fellowship to apply to USPHS; accession bonus; and loan repayment programs at IHS.-Importantly, we discussed having an unrestricted license, for example, a pharmacist may have a California license but practice in a federal agency in Texas.

There were several inquiries from the pharmacy students on the USPHS application process. We each relayed our experiences applying to USPHS and echoed in unison how long the application process was (one to two years), advising them to be resilient as well as seek other job opportunities while waiting for their applications to be processed by Commissioned Corps Headquarters and called to active duty.

Overall, this was an enjoyable and rewarding experience, taking me back to a time when I was once a pharmacy student myself, mulling over a career path upon graduation. Special acknowledgement goes to LCDR Kristina Melia for liaising with the LECOM director of experiential education and arranging for USPHS officers to have a presence at the LECOM virtual career day.

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## **Empathy as a Universal Language ... continue from [page 18](#)**

This rotation was so much more than enhancing our pharmaceutical knowledge. The IHS community immediately immersed us into the rich culture of the area. We spent much of our free time traveling, hiking, and learning about the history of the Navajo region. Even on the way home from one of the satellite pharmacies, we were able to visit the Pueblo Pintado site and learn about its deep history in the Navajo land. Working with the various different healthcare professionals at Crownpoint, such as pharmacists, nurses, doctors, and nurse practitioners, allowed us to take with us the importance of collaborating with others in the healthcare field. We learned different perspectives and were able to appreciate everyone's unique story as to how they got to where they were. We were able to take away from this rotation a whole new appreciation of Navajo culture and a deeper understanding of what it means to empathize. Overall, it was an experience we surely will never forget.



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**Northern Navajo Medical Center... continue from page 25**

Most of all, I feel super proud to work and serve in a USPHS uniform. Wearing the uniform makes me feel more powerful and confident. I definitely will seek an opportunity to work for the Commissioned Corps when I graduate from pharmacy school.



ENS Nguyen and Dr. Abisola Tairu in Colorado.





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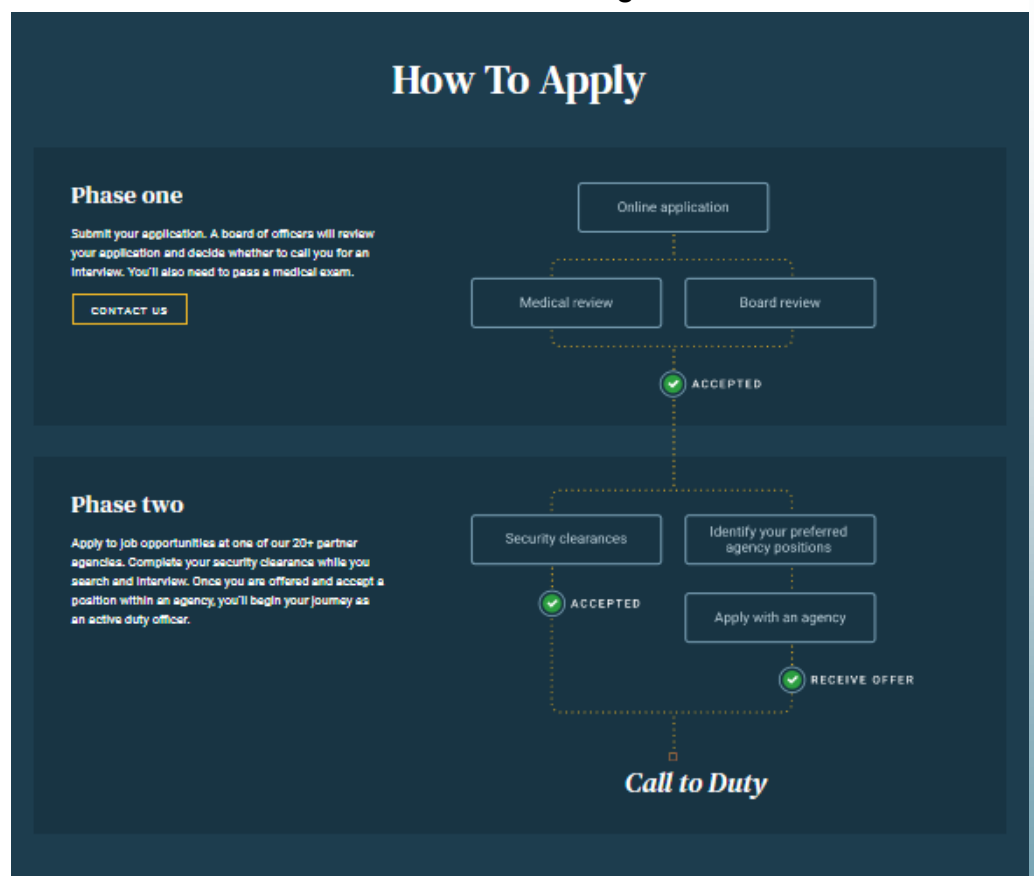
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The USPHS Commissioned Corps is looking for service-driven individuals who desire to work in public health programs and clinical settings. The USPHS Commissioned Corps is an all-officer uniformed service of public health professionals from various public health and medical disciplines. The USPHS Commissioned Corps is comprised of officers from 11 distinct professional categories: Dietitian, Health Service Officer, Environmental Health Officer, Pharmacist, Scientist, Engineer, Therapist, Veterinarian, Physician, Dentist, and Nurse.

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Fall/Winter 2021

## Useful Info and Resource Links

Agency	Contact	Telephone	Website	Email
Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP)	CDR Daniel True	304-379-5187	<a href="https://www.bop.gov/jobs/positions/index.jsp?p=Pharmacist">https://www.bop.gov/jobs/positions/index.jsp?p=Pharmacist</a>	<a href="mailto:dtrue@bop.gov">dtrue@bop.gov</a>
Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention	CDR Jennifer N. Lind	404-498-4339	<a href="http://www.cdc.gov">www.cdc.gov</a>	<a href="mailto:vox2@cdc.gov">vox2@cdc.gov</a>
Food and Drug Administration (FDA)	CAPT Beth Fritsch	301-796-8451	<a href="http://www.fda.gov">www.fda.gov</a>	<a href="mailto:beth.fritsch@fda.hhs.gov">beth.fritsch@fda.hhs.gov</a>
Health Resources & Svcs Adm. (HRSA)	LCDR Jane McLaughlin	301- 443-1603	<a href="http://www.hrsa.gov">www.hrsa.gov</a>	<a href="mailto:JMclaughlin@HRSA.gov">JMclaughlin@HRSA.gov</a>
Indian Health Service (IHS)	CDR Jessica Anderson	218-983-4300	<a href="http://www.ihs.gov/pharmacy">www.ihs.gov/pharmacy</a>	<a href="mailto:Jessica.Anderson@ihs.gov">Jessica.Anderson@ihs.gov</a>
ICE Health Services Corps (IHSC)	CAPT Jeff Haug	202-494-8081	<a href="https://www.ice.gov/detain/ice-health-service-corps">https://www.ice.gov/detain/ice-health-service-corps</a>	<a href="mailto:jeff.e.haug@ice.dhs.gov">jeff.e.haug@ice.dhs.gov</a>
National Institutes of Health (NIH)	CDR Fortin Georges	301-496-9358	<a href="http://www.nih.gov">www.nih.gov</a>	<a href="mailto:georgesf@cc.nih.gov">georgesf@cc.nih.gov</a>
U.S. Coast Guard	CAPT Paul T. Michaud	202-475-5171	<a href="http://www.uscg.mil/">www.uscg.mil/</a>	<a href="mailto:Paul.T.Michaud@uscg.mil">Paul.T.Michaud@uscg.mil</a>
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS)	CAPT Christopher Dunbar	410-786-6621	<a href="http://www.cms.gov">www.cms.gov</a>	<a href="mailto:ccinquiries@cms.hhs.gov">ccinquiries@cms.hhs.gov</a>

Website	Web Address
Instagram/Twitter	<a href="#">#usphspharmacy</a>
Facebook Page	<a href="http://www.facebook.com/USPHSPharmacists">www.facebook.com/USPHSPharmacists</a>
IHS Residency Information	<a href="http://www.ihs.gov/medicalprograms/pharmacy/resident/">http://www.ihs.gov/medicalprograms/pharmacy/resident/</a>
Uniform Information	<a href="https://dcp.psc.gov/OSG/hso/sub-readiness-uniforms.aspx">https://dcp.psc.gov/OSG/hso/sub-readiness-uniforms.aspx</a>
USPHS Commissioned Corps	<a href="https://www.usphs.gov/">https://www.usphs.gov/</a>
USPHS Commissioned Corps PharmPAC Website	<a href="https://dcp.psc.gov/osg/pharmacy/">https://dcp.psc.gov/osg/pharmacy/</a>
USPHS Commissioned Corps Pharmacist Listservs	<a href="https://dcp.psc.gov/OSG/pharmacy/listserv.aspx">https://dcp.psc.gov/OSG/pharmacy/listserv.aspx</a>
USPHS Commissioned Corps Student Opportunities	<a href="https://www.usphs.gov/student/">https://www.usphs.gov/student/</a>





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Exhibits superior performance and continues improvement in knowledge and expertise

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The UPOC Newsletter is potentially read by the 1,276 subscribers to the PHS-pharmacists listserv and over 767 subscribers on the pharmacy student listserv. In total, there are over 2,000 readers of the UPOC newsletter. BUT... it's up to you to distribute. Please take the time to distribute the UPOC Newsletter to your Universities or take a colored copy for your Career Fair Recruitment table.

*Thank you from the UPOC Newsletter Workgroup!*

Editor-in-chief & UPOC Newsletter Workgroup Lead  
 LCDR Brett Whitehead, PharmD, BCPS

PharmPAC UPOC Newsletter Lead  
 LCDR Gayle Tuckett, Pharm.D, BCGP, AE-C, CDCES



## UPOC Newsletter Workgroup 2021

CAPT JoAnn Hittie

CDR Victoria Ferretti-Aceto

CDR Ray Ford

CDR G. "Brent" Hobbs

CDR Robert Kosko

CDR Kelley Simms

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LT Ubong Akpan