

Speaking out

Advanced Pharmacy Practice rotation in India

I took two sixth-year PharmD students—Amy Sanchez and LaNikki Thomas—from the University of Findlay for a 1-month advanced pharmacy practice rotation at the JSS Hospital located in the beautiful city of Mysore, India. JSS Hospital is a 1,200-bed multispecialty charity hospital run by the JSS Foundation.

The hospital is the birthplace of clinical pharmacy education in India. Dr. G. Parthasarthy started this new department following his return from Australia in 1999, where he received clinical pharmacy training.

Pharmacist training in India since independence in 1947 has mainly been “product focused,” and most students graduating with pharmacy degrees even today find their jobs in pharmaceutical sales, manufacturing, or research. The second track of “patient-focused” pharmacy education started at the JSS Hospital has just begun to take root. I think it is a good idea that instead of copying the west and offering only the PharmD, India currently offers both BPharm/MPharm (product focused) and MS (clinical pharmacy)/PharmD degrees (patient focused), which have greater emphasis on pharmaceutical care.

Just visiting the JSS Hospital provided an education on the existence of an alternative model of health care delivery. JSS Hospital is a charity hospital. Here, patients purchase a registration card for Rs 15 per year (equivalent to 33 cents), that provides them with unlimited access to physician consultation with no additional fees. When patient is admitted as an inpatient to the hospital, the patient pays additional Rs 10 per night (25 cents) for the bed. Unlike U.S. hospitals with a maximum of two patients to a room, general wards of the JSS Hospital accommodate about 36 beds. Not surprisingly, the JSS Hospital lacks the amenities of U.S. hospitals, such as telephone, television, and privacy.

My students soon learned that the

hospital's pharmacy did not make any parenteral solutions; the patient's family or caregiver is responsible for acquiring the drugs from the medicine shop at the hospital or from an outside vendor and bringing them to the patient's bedside. A nurse then administers the drug and records its administration in the chart. Clearly, many points at which pharmacists can potentially intervene for safe and proper administration of drugs in

tion provided by Indian pharmacy colleagues, were able to hold some excellent counseling sessions.

In the afternoon, the student pharmacists answered various health care professionals' questions on drugs that were called in. They also responded to physicians' and patients' queries about various adverse drug reactions reports submitted to the hospital that day and attempted to identify the cause of the



(Left to right): LaNikki Thomas, Amy Sanchez, and Chandra Sekar, BPharm, PhD

the developed countries are missing in the above model.

My students began their day every morning with ward rounds; they made rounds with the chief physician, medical residents, and student pharmacists from JSS Hospital. Physicians routinely asked pharmacists drug-related questions and their opinion on their choice of treatment plan.

The U.S. student pharmacists received firsthand experience with treatment choices for conditions that they will rarely see in the United States, such as elephantitis, tuberculosis, dengue fever, and many physical ailments associated with malnutrition. They found the patients extremely receptive to their advice and respectful toward them. In spite of the language barrier, my students, with the help of transla-

problem.

Besides exposure to the clinical aspect of pharmacy, these students experienced firsthand the customs and traditions of a very different culture, and ate several “talis” of Indian food. During the trip, they had their first-time experience riding a train, a three-wheeled auto rickshaw, an elephant, and a camel. On the last day, they said, “Dr. Sekar, we will be happy to come back again as a pharmacy preceptor on a future international rotation.” I am extremely pleased with this maiden experiment, and if you wish to join in this extraordinary adventure next time or want additional information, contact me at sekar@findlay.edu.

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