Merger of the Drug Information Center with the Pittsburgh Poison Center

By: Christopher Wisniewski, PharmD

In May 2007, the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC) merged the University of Pittsburgh Drug Information Center with the Pittsburgh Poison Center to capitalize on their similar infrastructure of services. As the drug information (DI) resident, my first rotation was at this new facility, which is located at the Birmingham Towers in the South Side neighborhood of Pittsburgh. The Pittsburgh Poison Center, established in 1971, provides emergency poison information service to approximately 5.1 million individuals who reside in 44 of the 67 counties located in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. It is one of 62 poison control centers in the United States and is staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. In 2006, the Pittsburgh Poison Center staff responded to 123,228 telephone calls for emergency assistance. The majority of these calls, about 80 percent, came from the public, and the remaining 20 percent from health care professionals. The nationwide number for poison emergencies is (800)222-1222. More information about the Pittsburgh Poison Center can be found on the Internet at the center’s Web site: http://www.chp.edu/clinical/03a_poison.php#phone_loc.

The Drug Information Center, then known as the University of Pittsburgh Drug Information and Pharmacoepidemiology Center, was established in 1990. This center provides accurate and clinically relevant drug information to its patrons. The center primarily serves the staff of the UPMC hospitals and the University of Pittsburgh School of Pharmacy; however, the center also serves other health care professionals, both locally and nationally. The center received 1,416 questions from July 2006 to June 2007, the majority coming from physicians, pharmacists, and nurses. With the merger, the future of the Drug Information Center will involve more pharmacy staff and increased opportunities to provide information to a larger number of callers. The center will eventually provide drug information on the same 24-hour-per-day schedule as that of the Pittsburgh Poison Center. Health care professionals can reach the Drug Information Center by calling (412)647-DRUG.

As part of the merger of the two centers, the Drug Information Center adopted Visual Dotlab®, the database used by the Poison Center for documenting calls. This system was developed by a pharmacist for poison information center data collection. We have

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Resident Alumni

Where Are They Now?
Residency Class of 2006-07

William Bailey ('92) was recently named by PharmaVOICE Magazine as one of the “100 most inspiring people in the life sciences industry.” PharmaVOICE selects its annual “PharmaVOICE 100” based on feedback by readers who nominate their peers for this honor.

Professional Updates

Michelle McCarthy ('95) was elected as the president-elect of the Virginia Society of Health System Pharmacists. Her term as president began in June 2007. Michelle practices as a drug information specialist at the University of Virginia Health System and serves as the program director for the PGY1-pharmacy and PGY2-drug information residency programs.

Sneil Patel ('00) is now assistant professor at Butler University College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences.

Rhonda Rea ('03) began a new position as regional medical liaison, metabolism, with Sanofi-Aventis in June 2007.

Christina (Schober) DeRemer ('03, ’04) is now clinical assistant professor at the University of Georgia College of Pharmacy. She also is a primary care specialist at the Medical College of Georgia (MCG) Health System.

Recent Publications by Resident Alumni


Residents’ Roar

Meet the Class of 2007–08

Ryan Steadman
PGY1: Managed Care Pharmacy Caremark
Ryan is from Cincinnati, Ohio, and received his PharmD from the University of Cincinnati Winkle College of Pharmacy in 2007. His professional interests include the control of costs and trends in health care utilization, as well as the management of diabetes and associated outcomes. Ryan hopes to start a career in the managed care environment and to pursue an MBA.

Erin Suhrie
PGY1: Pharmacy
VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System
Erin is originally from Canonsburg, Pa., and received her PharmD from Ohio Northern University in 2007. Her main areas of interest are geriatrics and palliative care. Erin chose to complete a pharmacy residency at the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System because of the palliative care program and the great opportunities to work with the elderly. Outside of pharmacy, Erin enjoys hiking, rollerblading, traveling, and Steelers football.

Katherine Sullivan
PGY1: Pharmacy
UPMC St. Margaret
Katie grew up in Massachusetts and graduated from the University of Rhode Island College of Pharmacy in 2007. She discovered her love for Pittsburgh after visiting her younger sister, a student at Duquesne University, and has been hooked on the city ever since. She is excited to be spending the next two years at UPMC St. Margaret in a combined pharmacy and family medicine residency.

Christopher Wisniewski
PGY2: Drug Information
UPMC Presbyterian Shadyside
Chris received his PharmD from the University of the Sciences in Philadelphia in 2004. He worked as a staff pharmacist at Lancaster General Hospital for two years and then completed a pharmacy practice residency at Saint Thomas Hospital in Nashville, Tenn. This year, he is looking forward to determining what area of drug information practice will best suit him.

Benjamin Anderson
PGY1: Pharmacy Management
UPMC Presbyterian Shadyside
Ben received a degree in biology from the University of Saint Thomas in Saint Paul, Minn., and a PharmD from the University of Minnesota in 2007. He was in the first class to graduate from the Duluth Pharmacy School expansion. Ben became interested in pharmacy management after a rotation with the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists. He hails from Austin, Minn., otherwise known as SPAMtown USA.

Erik Abel
PGY2: Cardiology Pharmacy
UPMC Presbyterian Shadyside
Erik is from Huntington, W.Va., where he received his BS in biology from Marshall University in 2000. After earning his PharmD from West Virginia University in May 2006, he completed a pharmacy practice residency at The Ohio State University Medical Center. After his specialty practice residency, he plans to pursue a clinical position in cardiology or cardiothoracic surgery in an academic medical center.

Jocelyn Diehl
PGY1: Managed Care Pharmacy
UPMC Health Plan
Jocelyn grew up in Bedford, Pa., and received her PharmD from Duquesne University in 2007. She became interested in the managed care field after completing rotations with Rite Aid Health Solutions and Pfizer Pharmaceuticals. After her residency, Jocelyn plans to stay in the managed care field and work toward becoming a medical science liaison and teach at a university.

Megan Barkell
PGY1: Pharmacy
UPMC St. Margaret
Megan is from Jeannette, Pa., and she received her PharmD from the University of Pittsburgh School of Pharmacy in December 2006. After her pharmacy residency, she plans to obtain a clinical pharmacist position in an academic medical center. Megan’s interests outside of pharmacy include spending time with family and friends, outdoor activities, and watching movies.

Nicole Cerussi
PGY1: Pharmacy Management
UPMC Presbyterian Shadyside
Nicole is from Pittsburgh, Pa., and received her BS in chemistry from Penn State University. She earned her PharmD from the University of Pittsburgh School of Pharmacy in 2007. Her involvement in organizations and activities has led to her interest in pharmacy management, and she looks forward to gaining leadership and management skills through the combined pharmacy management residency/master's in public health program.

Lauren Fields
PGY2: Family Medicine
UPMC St. Margaret
Lauren grew up in Bethlehem, Pa., and attended the University of Pittsburgh, receiving her PharmD in 2006. She subsequently began a two-year residency program at UPMC St. Margaret focusing in pharmacy practice, family medicine, and faculty development. She is additionally pursuing a master's degree in public health. Other interests include community-oriented primary care, care to the underserved, global health, and the Pittsburgh Pirates.
Residents’ Roar
Fall 2007

Daniel Ford
PGY2: Critical Care Pharmacy
UPMC Presbyterian Shadyside
Dan received his BS in animal physiology and neuroscience from the University of California, San Diego (USCD) in 2002. He earned his PharmD at the UCSD Skaggs School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences in 2006. He completed a pharmacy practice residency at the University of California, San Francisco. After completing the critical care pharmacy residency, Dan plans to pursue an ICU position at a teaching hospital.

Gladys Garcia
PGY1: Community Pharmacy Rite Aid Pharmacy
Gladys is from New Jersey and received her PharmD from St. John’s University in 2007. She chose the community pharmacy residency because providing pharmaceutical care for patients in the community setting combines her love for business with clinical pharmacy. Her interests outside of pharmacy include spending time with friends and family, cooking, and dancing.

Joedell Gonzaga
PGY2: Pharmacy Management
UPMC Presbyterian Shadyside
Joe was raised in Milwaukee, Wis., and received a BS in political science from the University of Wisconsin–Madison. He earned his PharmD from Northeastern University in 2006. Joe is currently in his second year of the pharmacy management residency at UPMC. His professional interests include systems management, informatics, and quality improvement. In his spare time, Joe enjoys golf, tennis, cooking, and chess.

Stephanie Harriman
PGY1: Community Pharmacy Rite Aid Pharmacy
Stephanie is from Jamestown, N.Y., and received her PharmD from the University of Pittsburgh School of Pharmacy in April 2007. Her pharmacy intern experiences included community pharmacy, mail order and managed care, all of which helped to solidify her strong interest in community pharmacy practice. Her goals this year include developing her patient care skills and examining the relationships between health care professionals.

Pamela Havrilla
PGY1: Pharmacy
UPMC Presbyterian Shadyside
Pam was raised in Pleasant Hills, Pa., and received her PharmD from the University of Pittsburgh School of Pharmacy in 2007. During her final year of pharmacy school, Pam became interested in providing pharmaceutical care to patients in the critical care practice setting. She plans to pursue a specialty residency in critical care and ultimately a faculty position at a school of pharmacy.

Whitney Hung
PGY1: Pharmacy
UPMC Presbyterian Shadyside
Whitney received her BS in pharmacy in Taiwan in 2001. After working for three years at a pharmaceutical company focusing in infectious diseases, she set a goal to become a clinical pharmacist and researcher in an academic medical center. Whitney traveled to the United States and earned her PharmD from NOVA Southeastern University in 2006. She plans to pursue a PGY2 residency in critical care pharmacy.

Laura Jankovic
PGY1: Pharmacy
VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System
Laura is from the Pittsburgh area and graduated from the University of Pittsburgh School of Pharmacy in April 2007. She decided to pursue a residency to gain more clinical experience in her areas of interest such as oncology, ambulatory care, and anticoagulation. She plans to pursue either a PGY2 residency position or a clinical pharmacist position at a teaching hospital.

Laura Krugger
PGY1: Pharmacy
VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System
Laura is from Edinboro, Pa., and received her PharmD from the University of Pittsburgh School of Pharmacy in April 2007. Her desire to expand her clinical knowledge and experience led her to choose a pharmacy residency. She hopes to enhance her patient-care skills and become a more confident and proficient clinician. She enjoys spending time with friends and family, movies, live music, shopping, and traveling.

Laura Jankovic
PGY2: Infectious Diseases
Asma received her PharmD from the University of Pittsburgh in 2005. She worked as an intern and pharmacist at UPMC Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic prior to beginning the pharmacy management residency at UPMC last year. She is excited to be one of the first residents of the two-year program that includes a master’s degree in public health in hospital pharmacy administration.

Radhika Polisetty
PGY2: Infectious Diseases Pharmacy
UPMC Presbyterian Shadyside
Radhika received her PharmD from the University of Kentucky College of Pharmacy in 2006. She completed a pharmacy practice residency at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center in 2007. After completing the infectious diseases pharmacy residency, Radhika plans to pursue a career as an infectious diseases specialist at an academic medical center where she hopes to balance clinical work with her love for teaching.