

Cedarville University School of Pharmacy: Mission is at the Core of Who We Are

by Thad Franz, Phillip L. Thornton, Jeff Huston, Melody Hartzler, Emily Laswell, and Kasandra Chambers



Mission Requirements

In an effort to foster the value of character, ethics, collaboration, and global focus, Cedarville University School of Pharmacy (CUSOP) has instituted a policy whereby each student pharmacist must complete a week-long medical missions experience. The purpose of this requirement is multi-faceted but is centered around development of a heart for servant-leadership and a missions-focus. Some of these experiences are described later in this article and consist of both domestic and international medical missions. The key component for these experiences is that there must be an unmet need, and the students must develop a plan to meet that need. At times, that may consist of a weeklong visit to meet health needs acutely. However, it is our goal to bring an innovative focus on these opportunities as well. Essentially, we ask our students to identify areas in which they could help the community meet their long term goals to improve health and use this as a means to share and spread the gospel throughout the communities.

Domestic and International Experiences

While much focus is placed by some on meeting the healthcare and spiritual needs of people internationally, we have tried to place an equal focus on meeting the needs of those in our communities. It is often easy to see needs of people in underdeveloped countries without seeing the needs of those around us. Indeed, there are many communities in the United States where people live in sub-poverty conditions. These conditions often co-exist with low levels of health literacy, health education, and resources for good healthcare. This often results in increased health risks and disease which can lead to hopelessness. To this end, we see both domestic and international experiences both necessary and rewarding. We have established several medical mission opportunities and continue to seek partnerships to advance this focus.

Cedarville University is located near several medically underserved communities and poverty-stricken areas, most notably in Appalachia, Ohio and Kentucky. We have established partnerships in Athens County, Ohio with Good Works, Inc., with churches and pharmacies in southeast Ohio (centered around Lawrence County), and with Kentucky Mountain Mission in Beattyville, Kentucky. We have also partnered internationally with several underserved communities

through the university's network and the local church. In each of these opportunities, our students meet the health needs of the constituents and identify long-term ways to help the community.

Good Works, Inc.

Good Works, Inc. is a non-profit organization that is centered in Athens, Ohio but serves the general Athens County area. This is an area that has long been burdened by poverty and homelessness. Good Works has set up an innovative program whereby they provide practical assistance to those in need, including drug and alcohol rehabilitation, shelter for those without a home, and help for those with physical or financial needs to maintain their current habitat. One area of need that was not currently being addressed was healthcare. While there is a medical school and hospital in Athens and many great pharmacies in the area, the access to these facilities are limited due to finances or transportation issues. In this unique partnership, we are striving to provide our students with the insight of need and how they can help meet needs in a tangible way, not just financially. They have had the privilege of cleaning the home of a paralyzed gentleman, restoring the stability of a home for an elderly, widowed woman, and many other opportunities such as these. However, we are also fostering the relationship building within each of these events to identify ways in which we, as pharmacists, can meet the medical, physical, and spiritual needs of our neighbors in our communities and surrounding communities.

Kentucky Mountain Mission

Kentucky Mountain Mission (KMM) is a diverse experience. There are many opportunities for our students to act as the camp "healthcare professional" during children and youth camps. The student pharmacist serves as intake for all medications that are brought into the camp and provides appropriate doses to the children and youth. The student pharmacists have had experiences in which they could counsel the children on how to correctly take their medication (especially inhalers) or check on their disease state (e.g., diabetes). This has allowed students to ascertain the health literacy of the children and teach at the level of the "patient." KMM is located in Appalachia Kentucky, and there is a dearth of medical care in the immediate area. Health literacy is low and disease rates are high. KMM has used this information to provide an important outreach to the local community where they provide dental care to the community twice a year. The student pharmacists partnered with the dentists, dental assistants, and dental hygienists to provide medication advice to the prescribing dentist as well as giving disease and medical education to the community. This interaction led to an initiative in health habits, which is just beginning. The students recognized the lack of education on diet and exercise and the impact that this can have; not only on health of the patient's teeth, but also their overall well-being. Students are now developing materials to provide to the patients at these dental clinics and have begun initial steps in establishing bi-annual medical clinics as well.

India

During the spring of 2015, a pharmacy team consisting of a faculty leader and six pharmacy students spent seven days serving the people of Northern India through a partnership with the Delhi Bible Institute

(DBI). The goal was to come alongside DBI from a healthcare standpoint in their mission to equip leaders and love their neighbors. During the seven days the team was in India, six health presentations were provided on topics such as Basic Life Support, Depression, and Hygiene to over 60 students and staff at DBI within two locations: New Delhi and Dehradun. It was during these presentations that the students applied their knowledge and taught the people while integrating their faith and personal experiences. One specific example: several of the students shared with the Indian students how they handle stress and depressive tendencies while in a rigorous professional program. This connected with the Indian students as they live in a culture that demands high educational achievements in order to be valued as a citizen. Much of this pressure leads to depression and other mental/emotional challenges. The presentations were also beneficial to the leaders of DBI. This education now empowers them to continue to share what they learned with others, improving overall healthcare in their community. Additional resources were also provided to both locations where the presentations were made (including a projector at one location). This will provide a way for them to continue to share with others what was taught to them.

Honduras

In addition to opportunities in Athens and India, students had opportunities to serve in different areas in Honduras. Each of these mission trips involved medical care, including triage by a nurse, a visit with a physician, and a small bag of prescriptions. These mission trips also allowed students to interact with other healthcare professionals in a different environment. During the trips, students were able to interact with physicians, nurses, dentists, pharmacists, and healthcare educators. Students rotated through a variety of different areas during the trips including triaging patients, helping with medication dispensing, and providing health education, further expanding their appreciation for other healthcare professionals and their roles in patient care.

In addition to the medical care they receive, the patients are also presented with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. While the patients wait for their prescriptions to be filled, mission workers are able to talk about the importance of healthy living and share ways to improve their physical, emotional, and spiritual health. Because of this unique component, over twenty Honduran people at a single missions trip came to know Jesus Christ as their personal Savior.

Not only did the experiences impact the way the students perceived others in the United States, the missions in Honduras also rejuvenated their spiritual walks. One student commented, “Jesus says in Matthew 25:40, ‘Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of Mine, you did for Me.’ The physical and spiritual needs in Honduras are so great, and the work we did felt like just a drop in the bucket. I was reminded by one of my teammates that God is not concerned with numbers. He doesn’t count the amount of people we served or the number of prescriptions we filled. If we were able to help just one person come to know the Lord, isn’t that worth everything?” To watch the students grow both as healthcare practitioners as well as Christians was an amazing encouragement.

Jamaica

In 2012 and 2013, a clinical pharmacist faculty member working within a family medicine residency program organized an interdisciplinary team to join Medical Ministry International (MMI)

on their Jamaica project. The team consisted of family medicine physicians, medical residents, pharmacy residents, pharmacy and nursing students. The pharmacy residents were engaged in the planning and execution of drug acquisition and prep work that is required for this type of experience. During this trip the medical residents and attending physician saw patients after they were triaged by nursing students and other nurses on the projects. Our pharmacy students also rotated through triage. After the patient had been seen, they came to the pharmacy and integrated health. Integrated Health Education (IHE) is part of each MMI short term project. As patients waited for their medications, they were given health education tailored to their specific health issues. During this time, pharmacy students and residents provided diabetes counseling, asthma education, and medication counseling; they were also able to lay hands on these patients in prayer. The gospel message was shared during this point in the clinic work-flow. Often patients heard the message before they even arrived at IHE! The focus on health education and spiritual support allowed the patient to leave with something much more sustainable than just a prescription for a few months. Below is a testimony from one of the pharmacy students that participated in this project.

I finally got comfortable enough where I was also able to start praying with some of the patients. I was so encouraged by their faith and how happy they all seemed to be with so much less than what we have. One of my favorite songs we would sing with the patients was “I am blessed.” Even now when I think of this song, it nearly brings me to tears to think that these people living in poverty have a better understanding than I do of what really matters in life and the meaning of the word “blessed.”

Conclusion

CUSOP strives to provide students ways to grow in their servant leadership and live out the Christian missional life both domestically and internationally. Each student has taken advantage of the opportunities laid before them and God has provided fruits of blessing to the students and school from their experiences. CUSOP desires to continue to grow and develop service learning types of experiences in “...Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8, NIV). The school also continues to look for like-minded partners to collaborate with, so that God’s glory might be revealed through pharmacy students as they meet the needs of patients and impact their lives now and in eternity. We encourage you to contact us if you have any domestic or international mission needs in which we can partner. †



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Professor Jeff Huston serves as Director of Student and Professional Development and Instructor of Pharmacy Practice at Cedarville University School of Pharmacy. Serving the “underserved” with medical care has been a major theme in Professor Huston’s career. As part of his appointment with The Ohio State University College of Pharmacy, Jeff became the director of Columbus Neighborhood Health Center Dispensing Pharmacy (FQHC) serving the indigent population in central Ohio. Jeff developed an annual Advanced Pharmacy Practice Experience rotation focused on “serving the underserved.” The rotation included a medical mission trip to Honduras in coordination with World Gospel Mission where student pharmacists provided quality health care to the poorest residents of Choluteca, Honduras, in collaboration with an inter-professional health care team. Professor Huston is preparing for his 17th trip leading students to Honduras. jhuston@cedarville.edu



Dr. Phillip Thornton earned a bachelor's degree in pharmacy from the University of Cincinnati and began his career in geriatric pharmacy with a specific interest in alleviating adverse drug events. Building upon his interest in geriatrics, he earned his PhD in Pharmacology from Wake Forest University with a research focus on brain aging and a subsequent post-doctoral fellowship in Alzheimer's Disease at the Institute for Brain Aging and Dementia at the University of California at Irvine. Phillip's academic experiences include the following appointments: 1) assistant professor at Auburn University Harrison School of Pharmacy in Pharmacy Practice with a pharmacy practice at University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) Geriatrics Primary Care Clinic, 2) adjunct assistant professor at University of Alabama at Birmingham Division of Gerontology and Geriatric Medicine, 3) Director of Advanced Pharmacy Practice Experience and Associate Professor at Wingate University School of Pharmacy, and 4) Vice Chair and Associate Professor of Pharmacy Practice at Cedarville University School of Pharmacy.

Phillip has been involved in several pharmacy organizations, serving in key roles at the American Society of Consultant Pharmacists and North Carolina Association of Pharmacists. He has also served as faculty advisor for the Christian Pharmacists Fellowship International at Wingate University and Cedarville University. He has also developed medical missions and international clinical experiences for student pharmacists. pthornton@cedarville.edu



Dr. Emily Laswell completed her Doctor of Pharmacy degree at Ohio Northern University in May 2012. Following her graduation, Dr. Laswell completed a post graduate pharmacy practice residency at Grandview Medical Center in Dayton, Ohio. During her residency, Dr. Laswell developed and researched a discharge medication counseling program for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease patients. She was awarded a grant from The American Society of Health-Systems Pharmacists Foundation for this project. During her residency, she also obtained a teaching certificate from the Raabe College of Pharmacy at Ohio Northern University. Dr. Laswell is currently an Assistant Professor of Pharmacy Practice at Cedarville University and practices at Miami Valley Hospital in Dayton, Ohio where she functions as a member of the clinical team in the intensive care unit dedicated specifically to neurology patients. emlaswell@cedarville.edu



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