

# An insight into community pharmacy

**W**orking in a community pharmacy was not a completely new experience for me as the previous summer I had completed a summer vacation placement with the same company. This had provided me with an excellent basis of knowledge, confidence and experience for me to go into my preregistration placement. As a result, I felt able to concentrate on advancing my knowledge in the more skilled aspects of working in a pharmacy rather than just the basics.

The pharmacy I was working in was based in the centre of a large village in Yorkshire. This has quite a close community with which the pharmacist and the staff have established excellent relationships. It was a small pharmacy with on average five members of staff working each day including the pharmacist and myself. However, I was very quickly made to feel at home and felt like a vital part of the team, which really helped with my personal development.

Where I was working was very busy for its size and location, dispensing approximately 6,500 prescriptions each month. We worked very closely with two surgeries in the village. Over the period of time the pharmacy had been there, good relationships had developed between us

and the general practitioners, nurses, and other staff. One of the services we provided was prescription collection and delivery. We collected the prescriptions from the surgery every day but only delivered on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

An additional service we provided was the dispensing and delivering of medicines for the nursing home each month. This meant a huge increase in workload, as all the medications had to be placed into Manrex controlled-dosage systems packaging. We also provided controlled dosage systems for several elderly people in the community weekly — into either Nomad boxes or Venalink packaging.

There was quite a high level of requests for over-the-counter advice and products in our pharmacy. This gave me an excellent opportunity to use my counselling skills, interact with others and use my over-the-counter product knowledge. To help me in this area I did the Chemist & Druggist Cambridge Counterpart scheme. It helped me gain a lot of knowledge and confidence. I also learnt very quickly how important it was to appreciate the knowledge and expertise that other staff, such as the trained health care assistants and the dispensing technicians.

Ms Link is a pharmacy student at Bradford who has recently completed a community pharmacy preregistration placement.

## community training

Because the pharmacy was part of a multiple, there was an organised prereg study week where alternative services, such as oxygen, ostomy care and specials, were covered. There were also workshops on the Drug Tariff and preparation for the registration exam. These were useful even though I was only doing my first sixth month placement. Because I am at Bradford University I was also lucky enough to be able to attend the study days put on by the university. These covered the topics not covered elsewhere (eg, nutrition, dressings and trusses).

I also took every opportunity to use the study time that was provided for me at work. Sometimes this was difficult as it was a very busy pharmacy, and there had to be compromise with the needs of the pharmacy. It's important to agree things with your tutor but I also found it useful to try to grab some study time whenever it went a bit quiet. Probably the most useful book I found during my placement was the National Pharmaceutical Association guide to the Drug Tariff. It really helped to explain what is a really complicated book. During my six months I took the different opportunities that came my way to experience different things and broaden my knowledge of community pharmacy and complete my competencies. Some of the things I experienced were spending the day with the practice nurse at the surgery and watching minor surgery, I visited another store that supplies methadone and Subutex. I also visited a store that supplies oxygen and I spent a day with the area manager visiting a range of different types of pharmacies in the area.

I thoroughly enjoyed my placement, experienced a wide range of pharmacy services and learnt a great deal about community pharmacy. One bit of advice would be to take every opportunity that comes your way; make your placement what you want it to be, because no one else will. <sup>x</sup>