

An industrial preregistration placement

I went to secondary school in Malaysia then came to Britain to study pharmacy at the Welsh School of Pharmacy. I enjoyed the degree programme, but especially the practical work and two consecutive summer assignments in drug design and synthesis which gave me some good experience in pharmaceutical research methodology. So, it was natural for me to think about working in the pharmaceutical industry for part of my preregistration year.

It is quite difficult to get a split industry and hospital/community pharmacy placement because few pharmaceutical companies participate in the scheme. Both the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain and the Welsh School of Pharmacy were helpful in providing details of participating companies, and in the end, I received a few replies.

Preparing for the interviews was crucial. I found it valuable talking to someone working in the industry as well as previous preregistration trainees to find out generally what type of work was involved. My enthusiasm and persistence finally paid off, and I got offers from two pharmaceutical companies. I decided to take up the offer of spending the first six

months at Bristol-Myers Squibb (BMS) and the second six months at Whiston Hospital in Merseyside.

Project work

While I was at BMS, I spent most of my time with the pharmaceutical development group. I was involved with two main types of project work

- ▶ Routine projects. These ranged from manufacturing to dissolution testing. Working with other members of the pharmaceutical development team, I gained wide experience in dissolution testing and improved my knowledge of the whole manufacturing process from blending and milling to tableting, and it was great to be able to apply what I had learned at university.
- ▶ Non-routine projects. These included calibration of new equipment and developing methods for studying the physico-chemical characteristics of drugs. In particular, I was involved in developing a method to study the flowability of pharmaceutical powders, a project that challenged me to be confident in both defining and solving problems. At the end of my training I was expected to summarise the results of experiments I had

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participated in and to present the data to other members of the team. This certainly built up my communication skills, self-confidence and creativity.

Many opportunities

I was also able to spend time in other departments ranging from quality control to regulatory affairs. As a result of this, I became more aware of the career options for pharmacists and can appreciate the challenges and skills required in different areas. In addition, I have a better understanding of the whole process of drug development, starting from the pre-clinical development phase to clinical trials. What made the experience in the pharmaceutical industry so satisfying for me was discovering how a pharmacist could be involved in the various stages of drug development.

Hospital

Moving from the pharmaceutical development team of 15 people to a group of over 40 people in the Whiston Hospital pharmacy department (a district general hospital of over 800 beds) was quite a change. Having only five months to work in the hospital before the

registration exam, my training programme was quite intensive with a shorter period than normal for each area such as general dispensary services, medical information, pharmacy store, aseptic dispensing and clinical experience.

Medicines information was one of my favourite rotations, and I gained confidence in answering enquiries and finding the relevant information. One of the most satisfying parts of my training was to use my knowledge and skills to assist an elderly patient in solving problems with her medication.

I also spent time with nurses in the diabetic clinic, the anticoagulant clinic and the day-care oncology ward, which gave me a good insight into the running of the hospital and the roles of other members of the multidisciplinary team.

Achieving performance standards

During my preregistration training, I undertook various activities, such as preparing extemporaneous products, patient counselling, and prescription assessment, and I was encouraged to use opportunities in the workplace to achieve the performance standards set in

the Society's preregistration trainee's workbook. As the performance standards were not entirely relevant to preregistration training in the industry sector, my preregistration tutor and I planned the activities and experiences that I needed to cover.

Exciting year

My six months' training have gone so quickly. As I write, the registration exam is only a few months away, and the lectures from Mersey and North West regions, which were integrated into my training programme, have been valuable in helping me to prepare for my exam. I am grateful to all my preregistration tutors for their guidance and knowledge and to my preregistration colleagues for their patience and help. ✂