

SHINE AT SUPERDRUG

Rajni Surnam chose to undertake her preregistration training with Superdrug and found it rewarding. Gemma Cleveland finds out more about Miss Surnam and why she chose Superdrug for her preregistration year and career

Gemma Cleveland is editor of *Tomorrow's Pharmacist* and contributions editor at *The Pharmaceutical Journal*

For personal use only. Not to be reproduced without permission of the editor (permissions@pharmj.org.uk)

Rajni Surnam is a Superdrug star. While still a student at Brighton University, she was granted a preregistration placement with Superdrug. After registering, she worked at the company's Streatham store in London before being quickly promoted to pharmacy manager at one of its biggest stores: the Whitgift Shopping Centre Superdrug in Croydon.

Miss Surnam describes her new workplace as a "very busy pharmacy". On top of her performing the usual pharmacist duties of dispensing medicines and checking the work of technicians, in her case an accredited checking technician, she conducts medicines use reviews (around three a day), and leads smoking cessation services and a minor ailments scheme. Miss Surnam also manages three staff and the business side of the pharmacy's operation. "It is very helpful to have an accredited checking technician . . . this helps to liberate me so that I can do other things like MURs which I enjoy," she says. "It is helpful with everything I do that I have a great team who I can rely on," she adds.

There was strong reasoning behind Miss Surnam's decision to do her trainee year with Superdrug and then work for the company: "When [representatives from] Superdrug came to my school of pharmacy to promote and advertise the company, they seemed to be very friendly and I bore that in mind. I really enjoyed my interview — it was informal and casual and again the same friendly atmosphere came across. Also, when I

went to visit the store I was to be offered [for a preregistration position] I was impressed with both the tutor and the then tutee. They seemed to be on the ball. These things are what made me choose Superdrug over all else."

Obviously this initial impression has become a lasting one since Miss Surnam is still working for Superdrug and enjoying the friendly atmosphere within the company. "As a preregistration trainee, I always felt that I was not just any 'prereg' or 'pharmacist' working in a pharmacy. People know you and I really like that. It is easy, for example, to get in contact with all the other pharmacists within Superdrug or talk with regional managers or area managers or human resources." She also describes the company as "dynamic" adding that "there are always new things coming up".

Preregistration

Superdrug takes on about 30 preregistration trainees each year and wants to keep the programme small so that the organisation keeps good contact with each individual trainee. Its selection process is also a bit different from the process that most companies use. Superdrug invites 184 students in total to different assessment centres around the country for a day that includes a one-to-one interview, shop floor exercises, a written exercise and a group exercise to assess personality type. Martin Crisp, head of pharmacy at Superdrug, explains "It [Superdrug] is a fast paced environment . . . what we look for and what we tend to attract are the more outward-going pharmacists

who like talking to people and working with teams. I guess, to me, that is really where pharmacy seems to be heading — to a more customer-facing focus."

Training

It is important to Superdrug that preregistration trainees receive the support and help they need and the company organises study workshops, three or four days long, throughout the year for trainees. It also allocates a tutor to look after the group. "The training, especially during the preregistration year, was very structured. We used to have training sessions every six to eight weeks for three days where all the preregistration trainees would meet up and we would have guest lecturers and guest speakers come in and talk about different topics . . . it was very helpful," Miss Surnam says.

Superdrug also provides training for registered pharmacists in the form of in-house workshops. Recent workshops have focused on topics such as weight management and heart health, and this year Superdrug will be working with the company Mellerini to provide a session on allergy testing. The company also conducts business days at a regional level where pharmacy and store managers go for a day to think about objectives for the pharmacy business.

Benefits

There are attractive benefits for pharmacists and preregistration trainees who work for Superdrug. The



company pays its pharmacists' registration and retention fees, and pharmacists are entitled to 30 per cent off the price of all Superdrug branded goods and 10 per cent off all others in stores. The company also has a bonus structure and celebrates and recognises achievement both financially and within the team. A ceremony is held annually where awards are presented to the preregistration trainee of the year (prize of £250) and pharmacy manager of the year (prize is a holiday for two to an exotic destination).

Professional benefits for pharmacists include a system called the "pharmacy blog" which allows pharmacists to communicate electronically between stores with other pharmacists, internet access, and access to Medicines Complete and Martindale, both published by Pharmaceutical Press, and other online resources.

Another benefit is that the company allows pharmacists to put their own

personal stamp on a store, to make it more like their own. "Feedback from Superdrug pharmacy managers indicates that they feel 'ownership' of the business", says Mr Crisp.

Career development

In terms of career development, pharmacists can become store managers and involve themselves with providing additional pharmacy services or they can go beyond the store and work as regional pharmacy managers or in Superdrug's head office (Croydon) in central support roles. The company runs an internal management development programme called "Aspire" which allows pharmacists to acquire management skills step by step. Through this programme pharmacists may find they want to step into more commercial roles in the company and Superdrug is open to this kind of development. Pharmacists can also become preregistration tutors if they wish.

How to apply

Students who would like to apply for a preregistration placement with Superdrug should visit www.superdrug.com and apply online. Superdrug representatives visit every school of pharmacy at careers fairs each year and will be attending the British Pharmaceutical Students' Association annual conference in 2008 (24–30 March, hosted by the University of Kingston). Application forms can be obtained and handed in at these events. An application form can be also found in this edition of *Tomorrow's Pharmacist* (p33).

Superdrug is open to schools of pharmacy encouraging pharmacy students to have a day or two in one of its pharmacies for work experience. Call 0208 683 5415 or contact your local Superdrug if you would like to arrange work experience. ■