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Leadership Profile

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Meet Erika Hellenbart, PharmD, BCPS



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Clinical Pharmacist, Ambulatory Pharmacy Services
Clinical Assistant Professor, Pharmacy Practice
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What is your current leadership position in ICHP?

President of the Northern Illinois Council of Health-System Pharmacists (NISHP)

What benefits do you see in being active in a professional association such as ICHP?

Being active in professional associations like ICHP has allowed me to meet and pick the brains of people at other institutions that I would have otherwise never met. When I hear about all the great things colleagues are doing, it energizes me to do the same.

What initially motivated you to get involved in ICHP?

Many of my residency preceptors were very involved in ICHP and I could see how much they received from the experience. I initially got involved as a way to ensure I would stay in tune with

an ever evolving profession. As I have gained more experience, I have enjoyed being able to add to the conversation.

Where did you go to pharmacy school?

Ohio State University College of Pharmacy (Go BUCKS!)

Where have you trained or worked?

I completed a PGY1 Pharmacy Residency at Midwestern University which focused in Ambulatory Care and Academia. Following residency, I started as a Clinical Assistant Professor/Pharmacist in the Antithrombosis Clinic at UIC. For the past few years I have split my time equally between the Heart Failure clinic and the Antithrombosis Clinic at UIC.

Describe your current area of practice and practice setting:

As a clinical pharmacist in the heart failure clinic, I work directly with our cardiologists to optimize patient medication regimens, including patient education, monitoring, and solving any access issues that arise. In the Antithrombosis Clinic, I manage anticoagulation regimens in our high-risk patient population. Similar to most faculty positions, I am involved in scholarly activities like writing and research in the area of anticoagulation and cardiology and I also teach pharmacy students, both didactically and clinically. More recently, as the class coordinator, I also assisted with re-developing our cardiology therapeutics class following curricular revisions.

Is there an individual you admire or look up to, or a mentor that has influenced your career?

Too many to list! My residency director, Jill Borchert, as well as my residency preceptors have been wonderful mentors as a resident and even today. They are the ones who motivated me to become involved in ICHP. Edith Nutescu and Nancy Shapiro for providing me with great career opportunities and Vicki Groo for being an amazing mentor as I have transitioned into our heart failure clinic. I admire her ability to maintain a healthy work/life balance while being such a well-respected pharmacist/professor/preceptor and I strive for this every day.

What advice would you give to student pharmacists?

I would say to keep an open mind as to where your career may take you. The profession is constantly evolving and you may discover that your dream job may be completely different than you thought it would be during school, it may not even exist yet! You do not have to have everything figured out on day one!

What pharmacy related issues keep you up at night?

Ever changing prescription formularies and prior authorization processes! It is difficult to navigate as a pharmacist, let alone our patients.

Do you have any special interests or hobbies outside of work?

Has anyone ever said “no” to this??Of course! I like to stay active as much as possible by playing volleyball all year, cycling, snowboarding, and any other form of exercise I can fit in. I’m a mentor in a local running group. I also love to travel whenever I can whether it be long weekends away or longer international trips.

Do you have a favorite restaurant or food?

Chicago has too many options to have just one favorite! It would be shorter to list the foods I don’t like (anchovies and black olives; and anything crazy spicy)!

What is your favorite place to vacation?

I love the mountains all year. I went to Lisbon and Barcelona last summer and loved them both; they both provide a great mix of culture, great food, beauty, and even the beach!

What is the most interesting/unique fact about yourself that few people know?

I'm Canadian (eh?). I've been skydiving (twice), on a flight lesson, a helicopter ride, on some intense mountain hikes, and backcountry snowboarding, all while being somewhat afraid of heights.

What 3 adjectives would people use to best describe you?

Reliable, thoughtful, funny 😄

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