

## **Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science** **The Interprofessional Community Clinic**

College Connection

by Glenn Chanitthikul, third-year student, ICHP member

When I entered the College of Pharmacy at Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science (RFU) in 2015, I was unaware of the vastly different areas within the profession that pharmacists practice. Even within one health system, pharmacists take on different roles on the healthcare team, depending on their specialty. I was thrilled to discover that I could gain more health-system pharmacy experience through introductory pharmacy practice experiences at RFU. However, I wondered how I could better prepare for these experiences outside of the pharmacy curriculum. Where could I expand my clinical skills and abilities, and collaborate with an inter-professional medical team?

As a first-year student with a community pharmacy background, the best option for me was to get involved with RFU's Inter-professional Community Clinic (ICC), which was founded by students in 2013. The ICC is a volunteer-based student-run clinic that operates within the RFU Health Clinics every Thursday. Patients from underserved communities of Lake County have the opportunity to receive free, quality healthcare provided by RFU students with faculty supervision. The ICC offers a variety of services including primary care, psychology, pharmacy, physical therapy, podiatry and diabetes education. Students work on inter-professional (IP) teams when evaluating patients. IP teams consist of at least three students from different professional programs including medicine, podiatry, pharmacy, and other health professions. Other additions to the team may include a fourth-year medical student or a Spanish interpreter.

When patients arrive to the ICC, the IP team is the first to evaluate the patient. We obtain their vitals, medication history, past medical history, perform a focused physical assessment, and investigate their chief complaint. In addition, student pharmacists review immunization schedules and administer all recommended immunizations the patient requires. After assessing the patient, the IP team is the first to discuss a possible diagnosis and treatment plan. I benefited the most from this discussion as a second-year student enrolled in pharmacotherapy courses. Through each case, I improved my critical thinking abilities as I utilized clinical guidelines and recommended pharmacologic and non-pharmacologic treatment regimens to my team. After the discussion, the IP team presents their findings to a team of faculty providers, including pharmacists, physicians, physician assistants, etc. The patient appointment ends with the provider and IP team performing final assessments and discussing treatments and follow-up plans. The IP team then completes all patient documentation to be reviewed by the attending physician.

The ICC provided great opportunities for me to practice hands-on skills and improve communicating with patients. I learned how to express my empathy for patients who were struggling with chronic conditions, as they were long overdue for primary care. ICC patients often have limited resources and are very grateful for our services. We provide multi-disciplinary care and cater to all cultural and religious backgrounds.

This was the first time that I was given such responsibility for the care of patients and I was proud to start the process that directs them towards better health. Through the ICC, I realized every patient is unique and requires a patient-specific approach to treatment. By working on a team with students and providers, I expanded my knowledge about many other health professions. Likewise, other students learned more about pharmacy and the roles that pharmacists have within a healthcare system. They observed a broader picture of the clinical training that pharmacists receive.

I look forward to continuing my role as a student pharmacist volunteer within the ICC as I continue on to my third professional year of pharmacy school. Third-year students serve as advanced pharmacy students at the ICC and provide additional guidance to IP teams as needed. Advanced pharmacy students help IP teams prepare their presentations to faculty providers and assist with electronic patient documentation. In addition, they are available to IP teams to help interpret clinical guidelines and review drug regimens, monitoring parameters, drug-drug interactions, medication adherence, etc.

Through the ICC, I was able to gain more clinical experience and at the same time, help patients who come from underserved communities. My experiences at the ICC have complemented my pharmacy education at RFU very well and I believe this will increase my confidence on rotations and as a future pharmacist in a healthcare system.