Leader Profile
Lara K. Ellinger, PharmD, BCPS - Drug Information and Medication Safety Pharmacist, Northwestern Memorial Hospital

What is your current leadership position in ICHP?
Director of Educational Affairs

What benefits do you see in being active in a professional association such as ICHP?
Learning from and exchanging ideas with other like-minded pharmacists; being encouraged by colleagues to challenge myself; and working together to further the profession of pharmacy.

What initially motivated you to get involved in ICHP?
I liked the sense of community I felt at ICHP events and the idea of developing my pharmacy leadership skills outside of my work setting.

Where did you go to pharmacy school?
University of Illinois at Chicago College of Pharmacy (UIC)

Where have you trained and/or worked?
I completed a PGY-1 Pharmacy Residency at Northwestern Memorial Hospital (NMH) in Chicago and then completed a PGY-2 Drug Information Residency at UIC. After my PGY-2, I began as a faculty member practicing in Drug Information at UIC, and currently I work in drug information and medication safety at NMH.

What special accomplishments have you achieved?
I think staying involved and active in my career and balancing my home life is a special accomplishment.

Describe your current area of practice and practice setting.
I work in a large academic medical center in downtown Chicago. I have a hybrid position that includes drug information, medication use policy, and medication safety. I respond to drug information requests from practitioners within the institution; prepare monographs and help coordinate P&T committees; serve as pharmacy lead for the Medication Safety
P&T Committee; review medication errors and adverse events; and make process changes to prevent errors and facilitate creating a just culture in my department and institution overall. The best part of my job is collaborating with multiple departments (e.g., Risk, Quality, Performance Improvement) to implement changes that make our institution safer for patients.

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

Desi Kotis for setting daily examples of leadership and leading me to numerous career-advancing opportunities; Joan Stachnik for endless support and reminders to stay balanced in life; Mike Gabay for instilling thoroughness and efficiency in all of my work; Amy Lodolce for treating me as a colleague when I was a resident; and Mike Fotis for encouraging me to always seek opportunities for involvement in the profession of pharmacy.

What advice would you give to student pharmacists?

Whatever you choose to do right after graduation, keep in mind that it’s actually not the most important decision despite it feeling that way sometimes! There are also multiple pathways to get to where you want to be. For most people, where they want to be is constantly evolving.

What pharmacy related issues keep you up at night?

Figuring out how I can best utilize residents and students to help me get projects done. I really can’t be effective in this position without them. It’s a win-win situation!

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

Of course! They include hiking, skiing, crafting, and calligraphy.

Do you have a favorite restaurant or food?

I eat everything! A great place for steak is Bavette’s in Chicago. Although they don’t advertise it, you can bring in your own bottle(s) of wine, but their rule is you have to share a glass with someone else dining there. You can either choose who you give the glass to or the server can. The food is so good, I usually have to be rolled out of that place.

What is your favorite place to vacation?

Anywhere that has mountains

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

I’ve climbed and summited a few mountains!

What 3 adjectives would people use to best describe you?

Proactive, reliable, motivated