

# **Precepting Advanced Pharmacy Practice Experience (APPE) and Introductory Pharmacy Practice Experience (IPPE) Students.**

*By: WM. M. Grise, Pharm.D.; Clark Kebodeaux, Pharm.D.*

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1.5 Credit Hours (0.15 CEU's, Expires December 14, 2013)

## **Objectives:**

At the conclusion of this knowledge-based program, participants will be able to:

- Develop effective site orientation strategies
- Describe a process of preparing a practice site for the student pharmacist
- Create a strategy to observe a student throughout a rotation
- Explain the role of a preceptor in a school of pharmacy's evaluation of the student pharmacist
- Review the evaluation process of the student to assure that it is objective, fair, and accurate while providing constructive feedback
- Provide a foundation for the student pharmacist that ensures successful completion of the student's future rotations

## **Education Goal:**

To provide the pharmacist with the tools and strategies needed to effectively educate and precept student pharmacists.

## **Introduction**

As the profession of pharmacy has evolved, pharmacists occupy a variety of non-traditional roles within the health care team and are expanding their role within traditional practice settings. This positive trend in the profession has necessitated changes in education. A generation ago, when student pharmacists—referred to as students for the purpose of this article—completed the didactic portion of their education, the experiential rotations lacked variation compared to the options available to the current student. An accreditation requirement for pharmacy schools is to have the student complete multiple experiential rotations throughout the duration of the pharmacy school curriculum. While the educational requirements of students have risen, the total number of

students has increased as well. There has been a marked increase in the number of pharmacy schools and students over the past decade. These changes in educational requirements combined with an increasing number of students makes the educational role of a preceptor even more important.

Precepting requires extra work but is driven by a commitment to the profession and future pharmacists. Accepting the opportunity to precept students should not be a burden. There are many rewarding aspects of precepting. Preceptors gain knowledge by discussing patient issues, journal articles and planning projects with their student. Precepting a student also provides a foundation for a professional relationship once the student becomes a practicing pharmacist. These relationships are

based on the preceptor participating in their development as a professional. Precepting does not require reeducating the student on all the information they have gathered through pharmacy school, but it is designed to give the eventual pharmacist insight into the practice of pharmacy. Many students value preceptors more than other faculty because students are more likely to practice like their preceptors upon graduation. The purpose of this article is to provide tools and strategies that a preceptor can use to effectively implement a student into a practice and reap the many rewards of precepting.

### **Roles of a Preceptor**

A preceptor serves four primary roles in the training of a student: direct instruction, facilitating, modeling, and coaching. Direct instruction is the most fundamental of the four roles. The direct instructional role will be more pertinent to an introductory pharmacy practice experience (IPPE) student who is in their first or second year of pharmacy school. In contrast, an advance pharmacy practice experience (APPE) student may require a preceptor to be more of a facilitator. APPE students, who are in their final year of school, have obtained more clinical skills and require less direct instruction. While an IPPE student may need more direct teaching, an APPE student can and should be put in situations where they use the knowledge they have gained. The impetus as a facilitator is not necessarily on the knowledge level of the preceptor but rather on the experience the preceptor can provide a student. Modeling and coaching follow the same pattern. An IPPE student may require more modeling from a preceptor. Precepting an IPPE student involves explaining how a pharmacist should perform in a given situation. An APPE student, who is closer to becoming a practicing pharmacist, requires coaching on how they performed in a certain situation. All four roles are used when precepting a student but the level of experience and knowledge of the student impacts the focus of the preceptor.

### **Active learning**

Active learning is critical to the education of the student and central to the role of the preceptor. The premise behind experiential education rotations is based on active learning. Active learning is taking information from the classroom and applying it within actual practice situations. This can be advantageous over a subject-based test because the student must apply the information. Throughout a rotation a student may be engaged by doctors, nurses, or patients and be put in situations where they need to provide an appropriate response. The student is now engaged on a deeper level because the information has practical application. The preceptor allows the student to develop using active learning while being a resource for the student. This enables “real-time” feedback for the student from the preceptor throughout the learning process.

### **Precepting Opportunities**

Most pharmacy schools have specific faculty who can be contacted in order to create and organize IPPE and APPE rotations. These faculty members will also know the necessary requirements of each rotation site. While working with the college of pharmacy, the preceptor should contact the necessary institutional management to discuss the policies and procedures for precepting students. Most companies that employ pharmacists understand the educational requirements of pharmacists and will accept students. Having discussions with the appropriate parties ensures that all requirements are fulfilled and reduces the potential for complications.

### **Goal Setting**

Certain steps need to be taken to prepare the practice site once the decision to become a preceptor is made. These preparation strategies are not time consuming and they will make the rotation more enjoyable for the preceptor and more beneficial for the student. The first and most crucial step is goal setting. An effective method for outlining goals is the S.M.A.R.T. approach. The ‘S’ represents specific; the specific goals that the student has for the

rotation must be meshed with the goals that the educational institution and the preceptor have for successful completion of the rotation. The ‘M’ stands for measureable; evaluations by the student and the preceptor—both at the midpoint and at the end of the rotation—should be performed to ensure goals are being met by both parties. The ‘A’ means attainable; attainable goals are dictated by the resources available at your site and the skills of the student. For example, an APPE student’s goals will reflect those of a newly registered pharmacist. In the community setting, this would include all the responsibilities of a pharmacist except the final check. The ‘R’ stands for realistic; preceptors must be realistic and mindful of the students’ level of experience when giving assignments or designing projects. ‘T’ represents timely; a typical rotation will last no longer than 6 weeks. The student must have goals that can be completed within the time frame of the rotation. Goals that are specific, measureable, attainable, realistic, and timely will enable students to accomplish those goals during the rotation.

**Communication**

After the student’s goals have been established, they need to be communicated to the pharmacy staff. It is not likely that a student will have only one preceptor throughout the entire rotation. Reviewing the student’s goals and objectives with the staff will

<b>S.M.A.R.T. Goals</b>
<b>Specific</b>
<b>Measureable</b>
<b>Attainable</b>
<b>Realistic</b>
<b>Timely</b>

reduce any confusion that could occur. The student will potentially work with technicians, pharmacists, and other health care personnel. They need to be familiar with the student’s goals to ensure that no time is wasted. A staff that has an understanding of the student’s goals will enable the rotation to be successful.

**Orientation**

Orienting the student to the site at the beginning of the month can provide an excellent opportunity to provide structure and establish expectations. An effort should be made to contact the student before they begin the rotation. Usually the school provides each student with the preceptor’s contact information in order to facilitate dialogue prior to the rotation. This is a great opportunity for goal setting, discussing the student’s interests, and an initial introduction. The preceptor should attempt to obtain a student’s curriculum vitae (CV). The CV should provide information on previous and future rotations allowing the preceptor to design the rotation for that specific student’s needs. The preceptor needs to inform the students on what time they are expected to arrive, directions on how to get there, any parking restrictions, and unique aspects of the dress code. Taking care of these items prior to the first day enables the student to feel more comfortable and establishes an atmosphere of mutual respect.

On the first day, the preceptor needs to welcome the student and introduce the student to all staff members that they will encounter during the rotation. Making the student feel welcome and wanted on the first day will set a positive tone for the entire rotation. The preceptor needs to set aside a specific time on the first day to discuss the student’s goals and objectives for the rotation. During this process, it is important to elicit the student’s input. Students often feel that their input into a rotation is not important. Discussing goals and objectives with the student allows the preceptor to mold the rotation to the student, rather than dictate the student’s goals to them. An example checklist for student orientation is found on the right column. Discussing these topics first, allows the student

to ask questions while providing basic information the student requires to be successful during their rotation. Following the checklist and providing an effective orientation guarantees the student does not fail to complete any necessary activities.

An effective strategy for precepting is to ask open-ended questions and encourage the student to voice their thoughts. Establishing a dialogue with the student such as, “What goals do you have for this rotation?” or, “How do you feel you performed during that activity?” allows for self-reflection while enabling the student to express their ambitions. Interactions with students parallel patients; open-ended questions create a line of communication that allows for the maximum exchange of information.

<b><i>Student Orientation Checklist</i></b>	
Rotation hours	
Review syllabus	
Holiday/absence policy	
Rotation goals/objectives	
Student strengths/weaknesses	
Daily requirements	
Student interest areas	
Rotation calendar & deadlines	
Patient confidentiality & HIPAA	
Evaluate student’s experience/rotations/skill level	
Staff introductions	
Parking & personal item storage	
Computer/phone/fax	
Pharmacy/company rules	
Instructions	
Dress code	
Lunch time/duration	
Restrooms	
OSHA requirements	
Review layout and workflow	

A calendar should be created to maintain organization throughout the rotation. The calendar gives the student an idea of what is expected and should be provided during the orientation. The preceptor should discuss with the student how flexible or how strict the calendar should be followed. If the calendar is subject to change, establishing that precedent at orientation is important. Along with the calendar, the preceptor must establish any ground rules and discuss the evaluation process. It is imperative that the student be aware of expectations at the beginning of the rotation.

Orientation is crucial to the success of the rotation. Most complications that arise during a student’s rotation can be attributed to lack of communication. Thorough preparation and orientation creates a framework for success for the entire rotation.

### **Project Selection**

IPPE or APPE students must complete a longitudinal project over the course of a rotation. Prior to the rotation, the preceptor should consider potential projects that the student can complete. The preceptor should avoid “busy work,” but instead assign projects with purpose such as a journal club, an educational newsletter, or a review of a process within the pharmacy. Major projects, such as reviewing the effectiveness of a clinical program, can be undertaken by one student but finished by another. Project selection is ultimately determined by the preceptor, the student, and the goals of the college of pharmacy. Selecting a project is not necessarily about creating something new but also finding an idea that will benefit the practice site while providing good experience for the student. One of the most effective learning tools is self-guided, hands-on experience. Thoughtful project selection is an effective way to facilitate the student’s education while improving the practice site.

### **Evaluations**

The preceptor’s responsibility to a pharmacy student is to ensure that the student is competent enough to practice at an appropriate level. If the student is performing an APPE rotation, their

evaluations will differ from a student that is in an IPPE rotation. Goals, expectations, and objectives are all measured through evaluations. During the rotation, each student should receive two formal evaluations: one evaluation at the mid-point of the rotation and the other evaluation at the conclusion.

The student and preceptor should both complete a mid-point evaluation. The preceptor should provide an evaluation form at least 24 hours in advance for the student to complete. This time allows both parties to reflect on and evaluate the rotation in accordance to the set goals. Any differences in perspective need to be discussed at that formal mid-point evaluation. While the mid-point evaluation is not the final evaluation, it gives both the struggling and excelling student a chance to step back, re-evaluate, and plan for success for the rest of the rotation.

The final evaluation provides concluding feedback and requires assigning a grade for the rotation. The grade is based on those goals outlined at orientation along with feedback received throughout the rotation experience. The preceptor should take into account the requirements of the college of pharmacy in determining a final grade. If a student fails to achieve the goals of the rotation, the preceptor will be faced with the decision to fail the student. In this situation, the preceptor is a faculty extension of the college and must be willing to fail a student if the goals are not met.

Feedback from the preceptor and student plays a key role in active learning and evaluation. While evaluations are formal and performed at specific intervals, feedback can be informal such as 'snapshots'. Snapshots are individual feedback sessions for the student based on observation and the need to be timely. They can be based on first-hand experience, or they can come from others such as staff or patients. Both positive and negative feedback should be considered; however, when used as a teaching tool, it needs to be specific enough to be constructive. It is prudent to record these snapshots as topics to potentially revisit during the formal evaluations. Constructive criticism

should be offered to a student as well as encouragement when needed.

Evaluations can be complicated and are the most frequent sources of friction between a student and a preceptor. Common issues with evaluations include misperceptions and 'surprise end expectations'. Misperceptions occur in evaluations when the preceptor's perceptions of a student cause the preceptor to overlook the actual performance of a student. It is important for the preceptor to not allow their perception of student to inaccurately evaluate the student's performance. For example, a shy student with superior knowledge may seem less capable than an outgoing average student. It is important to evaluate goals on an individual basis and identify trends throughout the evaluation/feedback process. Surprise end expectations are a result of a lack of communication prior to the end evaluation. Misperceptions and surprise end expectations only reinforce the need for communication between all parties prior to the end evaluation.

## **Conclusion**

Precepting APPE and IPPE students presents a unique and rewarding challenge to practicing pharmacists. There are many helpful strategies detailed in this article for precepting students and organizing a rotation, but it is not comprehensive. Potential preceptors should use all available resources including the college of pharmacy, local and national professional organizations, and fellow colleagues with precepting experience. Pharmacists should take advantage of every opportunity to precept students. By accepting a student, a potential preceptor not only plays a part in educating the next generation of pharmacists, but the preceptor will be educated as well. Preceptors may encounter former students as practicing pharmacists and students will often give preceptors credit for their success. Effective precepting leads to superior pharmacists and furthers the profession as a whole.

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