**Background**

The transition from academic studies to professional career can be challenging in any profession. Career decisions are especially complex in the field of pharmacy as it has developed dramatically, expanding the number of job options. An effort to gain work experience, thereby increasing their chance of attaining a job thousands of pharmacy students attend the American Society of Health System Pharmacists (ASHP) Midyear Clinical Meeting (MCM) and vie for a residency/fellowship. Due to the level of competition, securing a position in such a program can be exceptionally challenging. With a myriad of different approaches to be utilized in the preparation for the MCM, we researched those aspects that are considered to be the most favorable in attaining such a position from the experiences of past/current residents and fellows.

**Objective**

The purpose of this analysis is to establish the best mechanisms through which eligible candidates can adequately prepare for and apply to post-doctoral pharmacy fellowship and residency programs.

**Methods**

**Design**

A questionnaire was provided electronically via Zoomerang to current/past pharmacy Residents and Fellows. E-mails with the hyperlink for the survey were sent out to our participants. The recipients of the survey were asked to complete the survey and also forward the e-mail to other Residents and Fellows. Responses were anonymous and confidential, with only the study authors having access to the data. Data was collected electronically 8 days after the launch of the questionnaire (4/9/14). This study was qualitative in nature and intended to provide insight and direction to prospective Fellows and Residents.

**Survey Components**

- The 23-question survey contained a brief introduction that clearly defined the purpose of the questionnaire and was divided into 3 major components: Preparation, Navigation, and Recommendations.

**Survey Participants**

- The recipients of the survey were asked to complete the survey and apply to post-doctoral pharmacy fellowship and residency programs.

**Survey Response**

- A majority of past and present Residents/Fellows (43%) recommend that prospective candidates conduct their own research prior to attending the MCM. They recommend researching prospective programs, contacting programs for additional information, and meeting with current fellows/fellows if possible.

**Conclusion**

- The major limitation of our results is that only successful applicants are represented, which does not allow us to determine if any of the preparation modalities represented here were used by unsuccessful applicants.
- Our survey was comprised of only 86 respondents (35 Residents, 51 Fellows) and was not comprehensive for all fellowships and residencies offered.

**Fellowship/Residency Application Process and the Successful Candidate**

Melissa Gallo, Pharm.D., Heather Schiappacasse, Pharm.D., MBA, Nissa Pisano, Pharm.D., Elizabeth Fung, Pharm.D., Drilon Saliu, Pharm.D.

**Decision to Pursue a Post-doctoral Program**

- The majority of responders knew they wanted to pursue a post-doctoral program 3 years before the MCM; 25% before the MCM; only 3% of responders decided to pursue a program at the MCM.
- Of the 75 responders who knew exactly which programs they wanted to pursue at the MCM, 80% of them obtained a position in one of those programs.

**Third Party Editorial Review of CV**

- 99% of responders had someone review their CV prior to the meeting, with 96% of those responders receiving influential feedback regarding their grammar, style or content.

**Scheduling Interviews**

- The majority of interviewees (73%) were asked to submit their CV prior to the interview. 68% of interviewees were informed of interview dates prior to the interview.

**Distinguishing Oneself from the Competition**

- 71% of interviewees were given their “Thank you” cards.
- 86% of interviewees were greeted by their interviewers.
- 94% of interviewees were given a tour of the facilities.
- 71% of interviewees were offered refreshments.

**Recommendation for Candidates**

- Although many preparation modalities are recommended to attain a post-doctoral pharmacy fellowship or residency, evidence from this survey demonstrates that certain modalities are more beneficial than others. These include researching post-doctoral programs before the MCM, asking questions of current residents and fellows, and having a clear idea of which programs are of highest interest before arriving at the MCM.

**Recommendations**

1. **Giving “Thank you” cards**
2. **Meeting responders**
3. **Drawing questions for programs**
4. **Creating a portfolio**
5. **Visiting program’s exhibition booth**
6. **Creating questions for programs**
7. **Practicing answers to anticipated questions**
8. **Creating a portfolio**
9. **Meeting current/past residents**
10. **Creating a poster presentation**

**Feedback Regarding Style**

- Most responders prepared their CV within 6 months of the meeting without the help of a workshop.
- 91% of responders felt they needed help with interview questions and received influential feedback regarding their grammar, style or content.

**Methodology**

- The three most popular ways of researching fellowship/residency programs before the MCM were asking questions of past/present residents and fellows (76%), reviewing program specific websites (68%), and attending residency/fellowship information sessions (62%).
- In terms of time, the majority of responders spent weeks researching post-doctoral programs.

**Survey:**

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**Limitations:**

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