

Introduction

An MSL is a field-based healthcare professional employed by a pharmaceutical, biotechnology, medical device, or managed care company. Job responsibilities of an MSL include initiating and maintaining relationships with thought leaders and clinicians, establishing and supporting clinical research opportunities, disseminating medical information to healthcare professionals, and gathering competitive intelligence.¹ The number of MSL positions is increasing throughout the biopharmaceutical industry and PharmDs continue to hold a majority of these roles.² This study was designed to investigate the post-graduate training that PharmD MSLs from a large number of pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies experienced prior to obtaining an MSL position.

Objectives

- Investigate the impact of post-graduate training and other professional experiences on the ability of PharmDs to successfully obtain an MSL position.
- Identify the amount of time that PharmDs work as an MSL before they are able to function at a proficient level in that position.

Methods

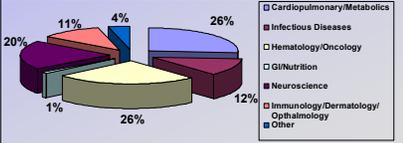
- A 17-question survey was distributed via electronic mail (e-mail) to PharmD MSLs at 20 pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies.
- Survey respondents were contacted utilizing the Rutgers Pharmaceutical Industry Fellowship (RPIF) alumni database as well as utilizing an MSL database through *Scientific Advantage, LLC*
- Recipients of the e-mail were given 30 days to complete the survey.
- A disclaimer at the beginning of the survey directed only MSLs with a PharmD to proceed and complete the survey.
- Participants were informed that the results would remain anonymous and would be analyzed and submitted for acceptance to the 20th Annual Drug Information Association (DIA) Medical Communications Workshop in Hilton Head, South Carolina, and will be posted and available for viewing on <http://pharmafellows.rutgers.edu/>

Results

- 78 MSLs responded to the survey. Of those 2 respondents only partially completed the survey and are not included in the analysis.
- Respondents had participated in a variety of post-graduate training programs including:
 - Pharmaceutical industry fellowships
 - Academic fellowships
 - Clinical pharmacy residencies

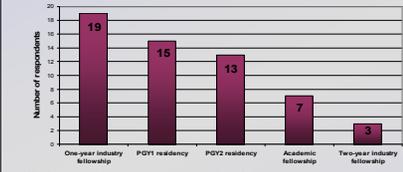
Results

Figure 1. MSL therapeutic area of focus



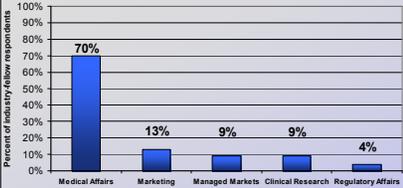
* "Other" responses included: Arthritis/Bone/Urology, Respiratory, Rheumatology, Hospital/Surgical

Figure 2. Post-Graduate Training Experiences



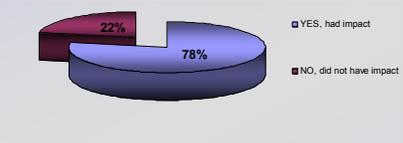
• 80% of survey participants had completed some form of post-graduate training
• Participants were asked to select all applicable post-graduate training experiences

Figure 3. Functional Areas of Rotation – Industry Fellowship



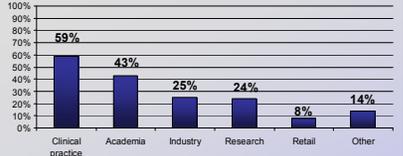
• 22 of the survey participants participated in an industry-based fellowship program
• Participants were asked to select as many rotational experiences as applicable

Figure 4. Impact of training on obtaining an MSL position



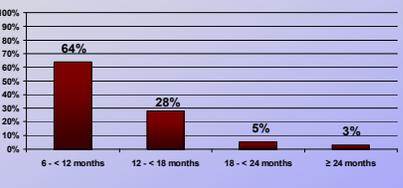
• Survey participants were asked if they felt that post-graduate training had a significant impact on their ability to successfully obtain an MSL position

Figure 5. Full-time work experiences prior to MSL role



• "Other" responses included: Managed Care, Sales, Pharmacy Administration, Medical Communications company, Home Healthcare
• Participants were asked to select as many full-time work experiences as applicable

Figure 6. Time needed to develop proficiency in MSL role



Discussion

Seventy-six MSLs with a Pharm.D. background completed the survey, 80% of the MSLs participated in some form of post-graduate training with 19 respondents participating in a one year industry fellowship, 15 in a PGY1 residency, and 13 in a PGY2 residency. Most MSLs completing an industry fellowship rotated through Medical Affairs departments. More than half of respondents (59%) had previous clinical practice work experience, while nearly half (43%) had previous work experience in academia. Most of the respondents identified that it took 6-12 months for them to feel proficient in their MSL role. Respondents indicated developing relationships with key opinion leaders as the most challenging MSL responsibility and the ability to work independently as the most important MSL skill to develop proficiency in. When hiring an MSL, more than half of respondents (54%) considered clinical and industry experience to be equally beneficial and 32% preferred prior clinical experience.

Limitations

- The survey was exclusive to only MSLs with a PharmD background
- The survey was distributed primarily through the use of the Rutgers Pharmaceutical Industry Fellowship (RPIF) alumni database which may have had an effect on the number of respondents who have completed an industry fellowship.

Conclusions

The results suggest that post-graduate training has a positive effect on the ability of PharmDs to successfully attain an MSL position. Therefore, it may be beneficial for PharmDs to complete a post-graduate training program before pursuing an MSL position. After beginning a new MSL position, Pharm.D.'s should expect to become a proficient MSL within 6 to 12 months.

References

1. Evens RP. Medical Affairs and Professional Services. In: *Drug and Biological Development: From Molecule to Product and Beyond*. New York, NY: Springer-Verlag LLC; 2007: 252-256.
2. Morgan DK, Domann DE, Collins GE, et al. History and evolution of field-based medical programs. *Drug Information Journal* 2000; 34: 1049-1052.

Disclosure

Dr. Robin Winter-Sperry is a paid employee of Scientific Advantage, LLC. All other authors are paid employees of Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey.

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