**Baseline Characteristics of the Medical Science Liaison**

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**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. The number of MSL positions is increasing throughout the biopharmaceutical industry and PharmD’s continue to hold a majority of these roles. 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 PharmD’s to successfully obtain an MSL position.
- Identify the amount of time that PharmD’s work as an MSL before they are able to function at a proficient level in that position.

**Methods**

- A 15-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 background to complete the survey.
- Survey participants were asked if they felt that post-graduate training had a significant impact on their ability to successfully obtain an MSL position.

**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

**Discussion**

Seventy-eight MSLs with a Pharm.D. background completed the survey. 80% of the MSL’s participated in some form of post-graduate training with 19 respondents participating in one year industry fellowship, 13 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 (56%) had previous clinical practice work experience, while nearly half (44%) had previous work experience in academia. Most of the respondents indicated 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 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 Pharm.D. 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 PharmD’s to successfully obtain an MSL position. Therefore, it may be beneficial for PharmD’s 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 proficient within 6 to 12 months.

**References**


**Disclosure**

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