

# Survey of fellowship experiences of current and recent medical science liaisons

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## BACKGROUND

The Rutgers Pharmaceutical Industry Fellowship Program (RPIFP) provides graduating pharmacists with the opportunity to pursue careers in the pharmaceutical industry by offering one and two year post-doctoral fellowships in various departments. Although there have not been any RPIFP fellowships dedicated to the medical science liaison (MSL) role, many fellows have successfully attained MSL positions upon fellowship completion. To date, no studies have been conducted to assess whether the RPIFP experiences adequately prepare fellows for a MSL position. Thus, RPIFP program alumni who presently work or have recently worked in a MSL role were asked to participate in this retrospective study. The term MSL is used to reflect a number of different position titles that engage in field-based medical communication with key opinion leaders (KOLs).

## OBJECTIVES

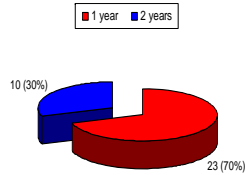
- Primary objective: Identify the level of exposure to various industry departments and participation in activities supported and/or conducted by the MSL function while participating in the RPIFP
- Secondary objective: Identify any experiences that survey respondents report would have better prepared them for MSL job responsibilities

## METHODS

- Using the alumni database maintained by the Rutgers Institute for Pharmaceutical Industry Fellowships, a total of 66 RPIFP alumni were identified that either currently or recently worked in a medical science liaison role. The 27-question survey was distributed to these individuals using the Zoomerang survey tool.
- The survey contained a brief introduction that defined the purpose of the questionnaire and questions focused on level of exposure, experiences, and training obtained during the respondent's fellowship term. Questions were divided into the following major components:
  - Background questions on duration and department of fellowship term
  - Identification of the level of exposure to various specified industry departments
  - Identification of the level of experience with MSL-related job responsibilities
  - Identification of level of training for frequently utilized skill sets by a MSL
  - Selection of 3 departments and 3 activities in which more involvement or experience as a fellow would have better prepared the respondent for a MSL position
- All data was collected and analyzed anonymously.

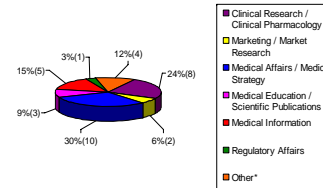
## DEMOGRAPHICS

Fellowship Duration



- Of the 33 survey respondents, 23 completed a one-year fellowship (70%) and 10 completed a 2-year fellowship (30%).

Department of Focus During Fellowship

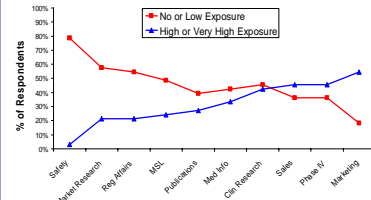


Even split DRA & Marketing; Managed Care; Sales Support and Planning; Agency

- Thirty percent of respondents were focused in the Medical Affairs/Medical Strategy department; 24% respondents were focused in Clinical Research/Clinical Pharmacology.
- None of the respondents had a focus in Drug Safety / Pharmacovigilance and only 1 had a focus in Regulatory Affairs.
- Note: If respondents rotated through multiple departments, they were instructed to select one area where the majority of his/her time was spent.

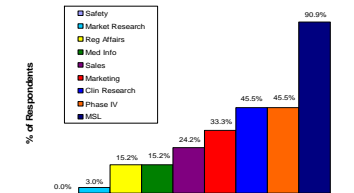
## FELLOWSHIP EXPERIENCE

Level of Exposure to Departments



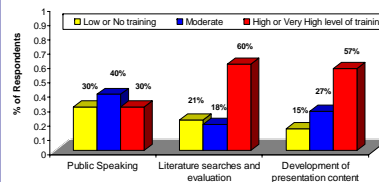
- A majority of respondents had high or very high exposure to marketing (55%).
- Departments for which a majority of respondents had no or low exposure were: Pharmacovigilance (79%), Market Research (58%), and Regulatory Affairs (55%).

Departments Where More Exposure Was Desired



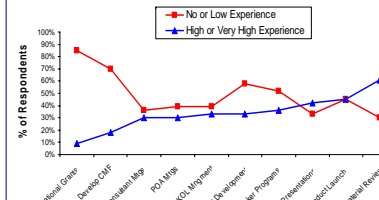
- The highest number of responses was for the Medical Science Liaison department (91%).
- The second highest number of responses was for Clinical Research (45%) & Phase IV Research (45%).

Level of Training in Public Speaking, Literature Evaluation & Development of Presentation Content



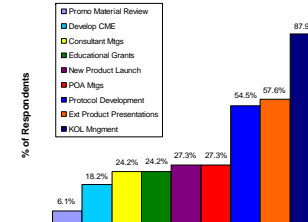
- At least half of the respondents reported high or a very high level of training in literature searches and evaluation (60%) and development of presentation content (57%).
- 30% reported low or no training in public speaking.

Level of Experience with MSL Activities



- The only activity for which a majority of respondents had high or a very high level of experience was promotional material review (61%).
- At least two-thirds of respondents reported no or a low level of experience with review and adjudication of unsolicited educational grants (85%) and development of CME activities (70%).

MSL Activities In Which More Experience Was Desired



- Over half of the respondents reported more experience with KOL management (88%), external customer product presentations (58%) and clinical study protocol development (55%) would have helped better prepare them for a MSL position.
- Only 6% of respondents reported more experience with promotional material review would have helped better prepare them for a MSL position.

## DISCUSSION

- Based on this survey, RPIFP alumni that have attained MSL positions received varying levels of exposure to different departments within the pharmaceutical industry.
- More than half of the respondents spent their fellowship focused in clinical/medical departments during their fellowship.
- Most respondents reported that more exposure to the MSL department would have better prepared them for their current role. This correlates with the high percentage of reports for more experience with KOL management activities.
- Many respondents reported that more exposure to clinical research & Phase IV research would have better prepared them, which correlates to the desire for more experience with clinical study protocol development.
- Many respondents received high or a very high level of experience with external customer product presentations, but more than half still expressed that more experience would have better prepared them for their MSL position. This indicates an experience that is addressed, but not necessarily optimized.
- Since less than 1/3 reported high or very high training in public speaking, there may be a lack of adequate training in public speaking during the fellowship.

## LIMITATIONS

- Only RPIFP alumni were surveyed; MSLs who did not participate in the RPIFP were not surveyed. Thus, no comparison can be made, based on this study, between RPIFP and other career paths in order to prepare for a MSL role.
- Results may not accurately represent the entire MSL population.
- The functionality and roles and responsibilities of MSLs differs among companies, so it is difficult to ascertain the exact experiences that would best prepare fellows for a MSL role.
- Survey results limited to 33 respondents.

## CONCLUSIONS

- The RPIFP exposes recently-graduated pharmacists to many departments within the pharmaceutical industry and affords the opportunity to develop skills that can be transferable to many careers, the MSL role being one of these career options.
- Major areas that RPIFP alumni MSLs would have benefited from more experience with were: KOL development, presentation skills, and clinical study protocol development.
- Survey results infer that MSLs who completed the RPIFP acquired experience in departments and gained training in skill sets that prepared them for the job responsibilities associated with that role.
- The results of this survey may be used to guide and enhance the fellowship experience of future fellows in the RPIFP interested in pursuing a MSL career path.

## DISCLOSURES

• Authors of this presentation have the following to disclose concerning possible financial or personal relationships with commercial entities that may have a direct or indirect interest in the subject matter of this presentation:  
 Trixia A. Camacho, S. Elizabeth Lucini, Bhavini Patel: Current RPIFP fellows  
 James G. Alexander: RPIFP alumnus, Current RPIFP director  
 Jack Bradley: RPIFP alumnus  
 Joseph A. Barone: Nothing to disclose