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 fellowship positions 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, RPIF 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 fellow’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.

DISCUSSION

The Rutgers Pharmaceutical Industry Fellowship

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

Department 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 (62%) and development of presentation content (57%).

• 30% reported low or no training in public speaking.

Level of Experience with MSL Activities

• Over half of the respondents reported more experience with KOL management (58%), 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 material review would have helped better prepare them for a MSL position.

LIMITATIONS

• 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

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 include experience 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:

  • Tricia A. Camacho, S. Elizabeth Lucini, Bhavini Patel: Current RPIFP fellows

  • James G. Alexander: RPIFP alumni, Current RPIFP director

  • Jack Bradley: RPIFP alumni

  • Joseph A. Barone: Nothing to disclose