

A Closer Look at the Pharmaceutical Industry PRN

Overview of the PRN

When the ACCP Pharmaceutical Industry PRN was formed in 1988, clinical pharmacists' roles in the pharmaceutical industry were very non-traditional. Since then, moreover, clinical pharmacists' roles in the biotech and pharma industry have grown, proving how the education and experience of clinically trained pharmacists adds value to the team working to bring new therapies to patients. PRN members' roles span all aspects of drug discovery, development, regulatory approval, patient advocacy, policy development, compliance, manufacturing, scientific communication, and commercialization. This diversity of roles is a tremendous strength of the PRN as well as a significant challenge, given that there is no single way to describe the varied roles of clinical pharmacists in the industry. The PRN brings together industry pharmacists across disciplines and therapeutic areas for sharing best practices and increasing the understanding of clinical pharmacists' essential roles within the pharmaceutical, biotech, and medical device industries.



Figure adapted from: ACCP Pharmaceutical Industry PRN Slide Deck. Drug Development and the Pharmaceutical Industry. Lenexa, KS: American College of Clinical Pharmacy, 2010.

Mission of the PRN

The ACCP Pharmaceutical Industry PRN's mission is to support ACCP members practicing in the pharmaceutical industry and to provide awareness and education to members practicing in other settings. Key PRN objectives are to:

- provide networking opportunities for clinical pharmacists practicing in all aspects of industry
- provide educational and developmental programs for clinical pharmacists practicing in industry
- provide information to the general ACCP membership about pharmacy practice in industry
- develop and facilitate research-based, educational, and pharmaceutical care collaboration between clinical pharmacists in the pharmaceutical industry and clinical practice pharmacists in academia or other clinical settings

Frequently Asked Questions

Fellow, resident, and student FAQs are, How do I get a job in the industry? and How should I prepare for a role in the pharmaceutical or biotech industry? There is no single answer to these questions; however, there should be some absolute prerequisites to pursuing a career in the industry.

First, work to understand the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) drug/biologic approval process by studying on your own the role of phases I, II, and III in the process of drug approval, and speak to someone with experience in the process to learn how the product's attributes, clinical trials, and clinical trial outcomes, together with regulatory submission and policy development, contribute to the final product available to prescribers and the patients in their care. Use the PRN's annual business meeting to network with members of the industry, and work with them to network with other individuals. The FDA drug approval process is described in detail at www.fda.gov/Drugs/DevelopmentApprovalProcess/HowDrugsareDevelopedandApproved/default.htm.

Second, because the industry is a constantly evolving business environment, keep up with the issues important to the industry and your company; examples include new legislation, regulations, or policy and its impact; new product approvals within your area of therapeutic interest; and new scientific developments in your therapeutic area. Pharmacists are generally very good at keeping up with new scientific developments, but they may struggle to keep up with industry policy and laws or the competitive landscape. Online sources for industry news with free subscription services include:

- www.fiercepharma.com/
- www.pharmatimes.com/news
- www.fiercebiotech.com/
- www.thestreet.com/biotech
- www.pharmavoices.com/news-releases/

Third, provide solid examples of your business acumen through your projects to show potential employers your effective communication, budget or resource management, and ability to deliver a project on time. Indeed, potential employers will be interested in your training as well as in how you collaborated with teams outside your own, managed projects, and dealt with challenges. Much of the work in the industry requires close collaboration for effective handoffs as products progress from discovery to investigational trials and regulatory submission/approval and on to fully marketed products. Each team is involved in different parts of this process. Moreover, because projects do not always work out as anticipated, provide examples to show a potential employer how you dealt with adversity or an unexpected change in plans for your role and how you made the most of it. Start collecting your examples now.

Industry Workforce

The size of the workforce in the pharmaceutical and biotech industry has remained stable since about 2000, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (<https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes291051.htm>). However, because more pharmacists are graduating today than ever before, the industry's job market has become very competitive. And although there are now more companies, companies have in general become lean in the size of their departments and flattened in their organizational structures, and their expectations have increased for employee experience and evidence that employees can work effectively across functions. A poster by El-Toukhy and colleagues of Rutgers University presenting the results of a survey at the 2012 ASHP annual meeting provides additional perspective on how pharmacists have entered the workforce in the pharmaceutical industry and what skills they have found most useful (<https://pharmafellows.rutgers.edu/resources/faefbcb69dae65fa6be2446afb3cf5e5.pdf>).

Summary

The ACCP Pharmaceutical Industry PRN is a resource to help you connect with potential mentors or begin networking with members of the industry. We encourage you to connect through our ACCP PRN homepage or join us at ACCP's Annual Meeting.