

Ambulatory Care at Oyate Health Center

Submitted by Elizabeth Tupper, PharmD Candidate 2020
Preceptor: LCDR Jason Kinyon, PharmD, MPH, PhC, BCPS



Caption: I enjoyed hiking and running in the beautiful Black Hills of South Dakota while on rotation in Rapid City.

During my first semester of pharmacy school at North Dakota State University, I sat in a class called “Introduction to Health Care Systems” and listened to a guest speaker named Fred G. Paavola, RPh, DSc, FAPhA, Rear Admiral (ret), USPHS. I vividly remember RADM Paavola passionately speaking about the robust opportunities available for pharmacists within the US Public Health Service. He described the pioneering innovations of Indian Health Service (IHS) pharmacists over the past fifty years and the ways in which IHS supports pharmacists to fully utilize all their knowledge and skills. My interest was piqued. During that class in September 2016, I promised myself that I would complete an introductory or advanced pharmacy practice experience within IHS.

Exactly three years later, I’m wrapping up five weeks as an advanced pharmacy practice student with Oyate Health Center (OHC) in Rapid City, South Dakota. As I reflect on my time here, I’m fortunate to report that every expectation that RADM Paavola placed in my mind has been exceeded. About a month before my rotation, the Great Plains Tribal Chairmen’s Health Board entered into a self-determination contract with IHS on behalf of the Cheyenne River and Oglala Sioux Tribes. Twenty percent of the Rapid City facility, however,

is still operated by IHS. In a time of transition and adversity, I’ve been impressed by the way OHC and IHS staff alike have embodied the core values of the USPHS: leadership, service, integrity, and excellence.

As a student pharmacist at OHC, I worked in an interdisciplinary team alongside pharmacists, providers and nurses in the outpatient clinic. I enjoyed providing recommendations to providers that were directly implemented to improve the lives of our patients. I completed various training programs covering tobacco cessation, hepatitis C, diabetes and naloxone, and I eagerly implemented what I learned. I thoroughly enjoyed participating in Pharmacy & Therapeutics Committee activities. I provided information to medical staff regarding vitamin D supplementation, wrote a policy to convert Dulera to Wixela, and began gathering information to add an SGLT2 to formulary. Additionally, I researched primary literature and current guidelines regarding the use of Ozempic vs Victoza and metformin ER vs. IR. I also had the opportunity to build relationships with patients and fine-tune counseling skills related to a variety of medications - from emergency contraception to proper inhaler technique.

I have gained many mentors, greater knowledge, deeper empathy, sharper skills, and stronger passion through my rotation at OHC. My experience has been so exceptional, in fact, that I became interested in pursuing a residency program as a federal pharmacist. My preceptor, LCDR Jason Kinyon, encouraged me to explore options through meeting the residency program director and conducting a site visit at Crow/Northern Cheyenne IHS, where I was warmly welcomed and very impressed. Although I’m not exactly sure what my future holds, I’m confident that within the USPHS, I have the opportunity to be a lifelong learner, grow professionally and personally, and drastically improve the health of an entire population. I am forever grateful to the staff and patients at Oyate Health Center for shaping my future in such a positive and impactful way.

Fall 2019

A Wonderful Time at the White Earth Service Unit

Submitted by: Saidee Oberlander, Student Pharmacist Class of 2020, North Dakota State University

Preceptor: Ashley Piehl, Pharm D

When I was looking at rotations for my final year of pharmacy school, there was one thing I knew - I wanted to have a rotation with Indian Health Service (IHS). Everything I had heard about IHS and the role of pharmacists within it excited me. Professors, pharmacists, and peers all said that rotations with IHS were a must do. Now I see what they meant! My time at the White Earth Service Unit has been one of the best rotation experiences I could have asked for, and has opened my eyes to the great impact that pharmacists can make.

During my time in White Earth, I was able to participate in a wide variety of patient care areas. I spent time with pharmacists in the tobacco cessation, anticoagulation, and Hepatitis C clinics helping with managing patients' disease states. To assess safety and need for continued opioid therapy, I worked-up patients for presentation at Medication Safety Committee meetings. I interviewed patients and helped to make therapy recommendations with pharmacists as part of the Pharmacy's Self-Care program. I observed Pediatric Advanced Life Support training, and learned about the ways to care for some of our most vulnerable patients in critical moments. In addition, I conducted a brief pharmacy in-service demonstrating the proper use of Broselow tape in the event of an emergency.

Some of my favorite experiences, however, were the opportunities I had to spend time in the community. On my first week, I assisted with "Diabetes Bingo," a monthly event put on by Tribal Health to educate Elders and other community members about healthy living with diabetes. I also spent a day with a Tribal Home Health nurse making home health visits within the community. One night, I helped provide flu shots at a "Women's Night Out" event at the casino, which promoted health awareness and gave women from the community a fun night out with dinner and an Elvis impersonator. I returned to the casino later in the rotation to help provide Smokylizer testing to Tribal employees.



Caption: (Left to Right) Heather Granvold, CPhT; Saidee Oberlander, Pharm D Student; Ashley Piehl, Pharm D

While all of these were great, one of the best experiences from my rotation was the Naytahwaush Community Health Fair. For the event, my preceptor and I decided to prepare a poster educating about vaping. E-cigarette use is shaping to be one of the biggest health issues of our time, and we felt it was important to present information about it at this event, which we knew would draw people of all ages. It was a wonderful challenge to design a poster to appeal to a wide variety of people and encourage them to take action for themselves and those around them. It was so rewarding to hear people say how happy they were to receive information on vaping, because they were concerned about their children, grandchildren, or friends. One grandmother even told us that she was going to take the information we gave her and drive to her grandson's college to talk to him about it that weekend! Responses like that

really encouraged me to want to pursue more opportunities like that during the rest of my rotations and in my career.

I am so glad I was able to spend time with the wonderful pharmacists and staff at the White Earth Service Unit. They are truly practicing at the top of their licenses and making a difference in the community they serve. I am honored that I was able to spend these five short weeks with them, and I know that I will carry on the lessons they taught me into my future pharmacy practice.

Fall 2019

North to Alaska

Submitted by: Joe Mauer, PharmD Candidate, North Dakota State University School of Pharmacy
Preceptor: CDR Anne Marie Bott, PharmD, BCPS, BCOP

As I approached my final year of pharmacy school and prepared for rotations, I knew I wanted to travel home for some of my rotations. Being a lifelong Alaskan, I thought it would be very rewarding to serve the communities I grew up in. This brought me to the Alaska Native Medical Center (ANMC) for an oncology rotation.

The oncology rotation at ANMC is both unique and challenging. Daily activities range from checking chemotherapy orders, counseling patients on home medications, and various pharmacy-related projects. All of the aforementioned activities provide ample opportunity to learn more about oncology and the processes to run an efficient infusion center. The staff are extremely knowledgeable, welcoming, and supportive of its students. They appreciate your work and provide valuable feedback to help you improve. During my rotation I was also fortunate to be a part of a marrow donor registry drive to help expand the number of potential donors for the Alaska Native people.

When you aren't at the hospital, there are a million places to explore in the state of Alaska. From getting pizza at Moose's Tooth or climbing Flattop Mountain, there are an abundance of activities to fill your free time. The sights are absolutely first class and are just one more thing that made this rotation a great experience.

If you're looking for an adventure, then this is the rotation for you. Not only do you get the opportunity to expand your knowledge, but you get to see the intricacies of a public health facility and to serve the Alaska Native community. This rotation has made a lasting impact on me and I hope to utilize the knowledge and skills I've developed here to enhance my future practice.

