

Building an Advanced Pharmacy Practice Experience (APPE) site for Doctor of Pharmacy students

Melissa Somma McGivney, PharmD*

Community Practice Residency Program, University of Pittsburgh School of Pharmacy, Pittsburgh, PA 15261

Abstract

As the role of experiential learning in pharmacy education expands, it is important to develop pharmacy practice sites where students can be directly involved with patient care. Colleges of pharmacy and individual faculty members must carefully evaluate potential practice sites to best create opportunities for student learning. Planning for a new practice should include: creating a vision for the practice, developing a practice plan, determining the model for faculty support, and creating integral student learning experiences. Ultimately, the faculty-supported practice sites should be a model of pharmacist-provided patient care for students, residents, and the health care community.

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Pharmacy education is steadily moving toward a balance of traditional content-driven classroom learning and experiential education. The Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE) Standards, updated in 2007, require nearly one-third of the pharmacy curriculum to be based in experiential learning.¹ This requirement, combined with advances in pharmacist-provided patient care such as medication therapy management (MTM),² increasingly calls for pharmacy faculty to design and deliver experiential learning opportunities for Doctor of Pharmacy students.

Building experiential learning sites and advanced pharmacy practice experiences (APPEs) requires an alignment of the school of pharmacy's vision of educating students to provide patient care with faculty expertise and available clinical practice sites.³ With deliberate planning, students' educational experiences can be incorporated into existing clinical practices, providing substantial benefit to both pharmacy schools and faculty. This article will explore specific

considerations for developing new clinical practice sites for APPE students.

Expectations of faculty members, colleges of pharmacy, and practice sites

Faculty who work within clinical practices provide opportunities for faculty/preceptor development, interprofessional training, scholarship, and, importantly, a clear focus on student learning. A variety of faculty-supported experiential learning practice site models exists. These models, depicted in Figure 1, include (but are not limited to): one faculty member paired with one site; one faculty member working with multiple practice sites and corresponding preceptors within a focal area (e.g., multiple internal medicine units or multiple pharmacies within a community chain); or faculty who share a practice site (e.g., clinical faculty partnered with a research-clinical faculty). Regardless of the type of practice or organization of faculty support, the goal remains the same: to develop an advanced pharmacy practice patient care model where student learning is integral to the patient's care.

The process of developing a new experiential learning site begins with two important considerations: the needs within the college of pharmacy curriculum and the needs of

* Corresponding author. Melissa Somma McGivney, PharmD, Assistant Professor of Pharmacy & Therapeutics, Director, Community Practice Residency Program, University of Pittsburgh School of Pharmacy, Pittsburgh, PA 15261.

E-mail address: somma@pitt.edu.

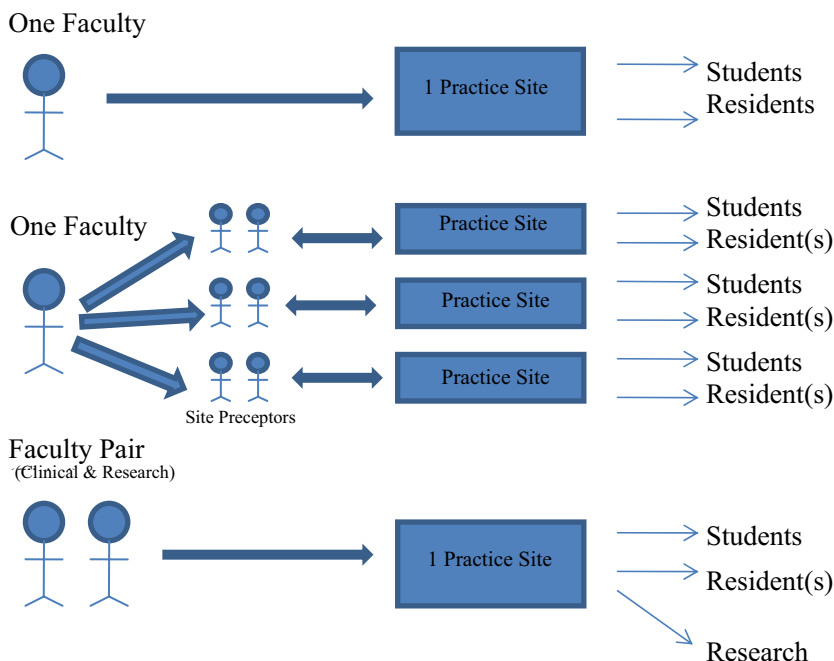


Fig. 1. Faculty/practice site partnership models.

the patient care practice(s) that are being evaluated for development. At the college level, support from the Department Chair and/or Dean is required. Unmet needs in the curriculum, faculty interest and areas of expertise, and the practice sites that are available or that could benefit from advanced patient care services must be assessed before a partnership with a practice site can be initiated. Curricular requirements and faculty expertise must be matched with available practice sites.

Early in the planning phase it is important to establish the college's expectations regarding the amount of time required and allowed for faculty to establish the practice site and maintain ongoing practice responsibilities at the site. For instance, the extent of the teaching responsibilities (initially and longitudinally) are for the faculty member, and the expected balance of research/scholarly work compared with patient care and service responsibilities need to be identified up front. In general, a minimum of 6 months is needed to build the framework of a service that integrates students into patient care. In the development of an APPE site, the desire to establish a residency program at this site should also be considered in the planning process.

Evaluation of a practice site(s)

Potential sites for APPEs are those that have patient care needs and the ability to accommodate the needs of student education. Once administrative support (e.g., Department Chair and/or Dean) is obtained, the primary faculty member who seeks to develop a practice site, can initiate contact

with potential sites. The process of site identification can be initiated in a variety of ways, including contacting administrative personnel at the site (e.g., Director of Pharmacy, director of a physician practice, pharmacy administrator) or using established faculty and preceptor contacts associated with the college (e.g., individual attending physician champion for pharmacy services, clinical pharmacist interested in expanding services).

An initial meeting between faculty and key personnel at the practice site is an important step in assessing the potential types of patient care services that could be offered or expanded with the addition of a pharmacist to the patient care team. This initial exploratory meeting provides an opportunity to build the relationship between the college leadership and faculty member with the leadership and practitioners at the practice site. For new sites, it is essential to set expectations from the very beginning regarding who will be the contact person at the practice site, how financial arrangements will be handled (e.g., faculty salary support, patient care billing, patient care supplies), and the availability of health care practitioners to work with student pharmacists.

The ability of the practice site to provide financial support for faculty must also be considered in the initial assessment of a practice site. Table 1 compares the balance of faculty responsibilities in 4 different models of financial support based on the amount of time the faculty spends at the practice site. Departments may use one or all of these models to maintain education and practice-based experiences for students. One important aspect of the site's ability to provide financial support is whether the faculty member

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