



Slip programme? A new speciality in pharmacy?

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When I heard my colleagues talking about the University of the Western Cape's SLIP students at their pharmacies, my first thought was: Oh my goodness, I must be getting old and losing touch as I have never heard of this field of specialisation!

I eventually got to understand that this is a UWC School of Pharmacy programme for pharmacy students to gain practical experience in real life situations, so as to

better prepare them to join the profession on completion of their studies. When our pharmacy was asked to join the Service Learning in Pharmacy (SLIP) programme in 2015, I accepted without hesitation. The pharmacy team at Helderberg Hospital was excited about two groups of students coming to spend time with us.

Our saving grace was the fact that I was invited to an introduction session at the School of Pharmacy. Carrie de Beer, my colleague from Kleinvele Community Day Centre, did a presentation on their experience and involvement with the SLIP Programme. She urged the participating facilities to prepare for the students' visits. She suggested a roster to provide structure to the students' time at the facility.

Well, I never knew how complicated it is to draw up a roster from scratch for four students, six hours per day for 5 days, slotting into the staff's daily duties and responsibilities. The staff complement at Helderberg Hospital is 5 pharmacists, 2 half day locum pharmacists, 4 qualified pharmacist's assistants and a basic pharmacist's assistant learner. Each member of staff was involved in the training of the third year students and each member was allocated specific responsibilities.

For example:

Waste management – Learner Basic

TTO Cupboard – Qualified Basic 1

Stock Control – Qualified Post-Basic 2

Chronic Dispensing Unit [CDU] – Qualified Post-Basic 3

Blue Board and In-patients – Pharmacist

The staff loved the interaction and eagerly shared their knowledge and experiences with the equally eager students.

By the end of the first week when the first group of four students left, we made some changes to the roster for the second group of five students. Two weeks and 2 groups of students later, my staff and I were exhausted. Teaching students while performing our daily duties was new to us. However, we were happy and content that we could be part of the UWC SLIP Programme.

The most rewarding aspect for me was how the pharmacist's assistants reacted to their involvement in the programme. All the assistants, from learner to experienced post-basic, flourished. They were given the responsibility to share with and train third year pharmacy students. I explained to each of them what I thought they should share with the students, suggested resources they could use, and what Standard Operation Procedures they needed to give to the students. They were solely responsible for preparing the material for the student packs. At the scheduled time, they interacted with the students, sharing their knowledge and showing students how it is done. The pharmacist's assistants felt valued because they were entrusted with teaching the SLIP students. As a result of the interaction between the students and the assistants, two of the assistants are now seriously considering studying pharmacy.

We now have a SLIP File with master copies for each of the training blocks. We have learned a lot, we will improve our scheduling and will most definitely again include all members of the pharmacy team in the training of and sharing with the students.

We are ready for SLIP 2016!