



Lessons Learned and Taught

LAU students study pharmaceutical success in Texas

By Brooke Grasberger

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—Dr. Aline Saad, chair of the Department of Pharmaceutical Practice

Upon their return from rotations at the Methodist Hospital in Dallas, Texas, LAU pharmacy students appear to have undergone a metamorphosis.

"They return feeling like they're going to change the world," says Dr. Aline Saad, clinical assistant professor and chair of the Department of Pharmaceutical Practice, as she reflects on the effects of the affiliation between LAU and the American hospital. "The energy they come back with can light up a room."

For the past two years, fourth-year pharmacy students have engaged in required U.S. rotations at the Methodist Hospital, an institution renowned internationally for its focus on holistic patient care and its extensive facilities, including 515 beds, all-private rooms and a staff of more than 250 physicians.

Mike Liebl, clinical manager of the hospital's Department of Pharmacy, is the facilitator for LAU students, whom he gets to know well during their time in the States. "They are extremely intelligent," he says, "and all dedicated to both their profession and to professionalism."

At the Methodist Hospital, these qualities are necessary, as students undergo rigorous training while being held to the twin high standards of the hospital and LAU. Recent graduate Patrick Tannous participated in the fall 2012 rotation, during which he cycled through inpatient and outpatient care, studied the structure and functions of the hospital, and had the opportunity to work in a community pharmacy.

"We learned how to integrate into a medical team, how a drug is moved through the hospital to the patient, how to decide whether or not to include a drug in the hospital's roster, and much more about the mechanisms of the pharmaceutical practice," he says.

Fellow classmate Zeina Shaer was especially impressed by the hospital staff's devotion to patients. "I admired the institution's organization, atmosphere of respect, and the level of commitment we found there," she says.

Liebl points out that the learning process is not a one-way street.

"When we first started the program, we underestimated the extent of personal growth that would result from this cultural exchange."

Tannous recalls exchanges as lighthearted as showing the American pharmacists how to dance dabke, and as serious as demonstrating the importance of Lebanon's multilingualism by translating for patients who spoke Arabic, Armenian and French.

At the Methodist Hospital, LAU students learn some of the top pharmaceutical practices in the world, which they are bringing back to Lebanon to improve their country's health and patient care.

Their new expertise manifests in other areas, too, as Dean of the School of Pharmacy Dr. Pierre Zalloua proudly mentions. "Our students recently placed third in the U.S.'s most prestigious clinical skills competition," he says, referring to the 2012 American Society of Health-System Pharmacists' Clinical Skills Competition, "a clear measure of the effect this training has had on our students."

The development of the affiliation between LAU and the Methodist Hospital is, however, far from over. According to Zalloua, a faculty exchange with the hospital is currently in the works. "We're in the process of planning the first visit for this fall," he says, indicating that the trading of expertise, both cultural and pharmaceutical, will only increase in the future.

LAU School of Pharmacy students upon completion of their Spring 2013 rotations at the Methodist Hospital in Texas

