



Expanding the field of learning

By Leena Saidi

Pharmacy students experience firsthand the mechanisms of advanced pharmacy practice

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—Michael G. Liebl, the U.S. regional director of the program

Upon their return from their advanced pharmacy practice experiences (APPEs) at the Houston Methodist Hospital in Texas, LAU Doctor of Pharmacy (Pharm.D.) students appear to have undergone a life-changing experience. "They return to Lebanon with a confidence about them that was not there when they arrived," says Michael G. Liebl, clinical manager of the hospital's Department of Pharmacy and the U.S. regional director of the program since its inception in October 2011.

In collaboration with Houston Methodist Hospital, the LAU pharmacy program provides four months of required APPEs. During this time students receive the instruction and experience necessary to achieve specific learning objectives related to medical and pharmacy knowledge and patient care. They also deepen their interpersonal and communication skills.

Yara Zgheib, currently on rotation in Houston, believes that since the university's Pharm.D. program is accredited by the U.S. Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE), it is important to experience the practice of the profession in that country. "The difference also lies in the fact that in the U.S. clinical pharmacy is way more developed," she points out.

"When we started the program in 2011 we worked with eight students a semester. We now support over 30 students annually," says Liebl. The students receive hands-on training in a fast-paced health care environment in which they utilize innovative tools and technologies to serve a wide spectrum of patients, enhancing their ability to work with multidisciplinary teams and gain autonomy.

Along with the increase in the number

of students has come an expansion of their learning activities. LAU Pharm.D. students are now able to obtain the American Pharmacists Association (APhA)-Based Immunization Training Certification. The program "teaches pharmacists the skills necessary to become a primary source for vaccine information and administration," says Imad Btaiche, the dean of the university's School of Pharmacy.

Houston Methodist Hospital also now offers postgraduate residency training for international pharmacy graduates, including LAU Pharm.D. graduates. "Our mission for this program is to develop clinical pharmacy leaders that can return to their country of origin and expand the profession there," explains Vice President of Global Patient Services, Education and Training Summer Dajani, adding, "We began this program in 2013 and have already graduated two incredible LAU alumni."

The program also allows a holistic approach to education, with the development of students' soft skills through training and mentoring programs. According to Rana el-Noamani, a Pharm.D. student, such rotations are crucial to learn what real clinical pharmacy is about and to understand the different roles a pharmacist can fulfill. "Direct patient interaction helped me develop self confidence and be prepared for any question the patient may ask."

El-Noamani completed her required APPEs at Houston Methodist Hospital in spring 2015, during which she went through the Drug Information Center, Internal Medicine, Continuity of Care and Community Pharmacy rotations. "Meeting experts in their fields and learning from their experience was priceless," she affirms.

"The hospital also benefits through LAU's partnership by getting global exposure for our pharmacy programs," says President and CEO of Houston Methodist Global Health Care Services Cathy Easter, who worked closely with LAU President Joseph G. Jabbara to establish the joint program between the two institutions. "LAU is an elite university with highly talented students. Their participation has added a higher standard of expectations and great competition for other residency students in our program," she adds.