

Pharmacy Program returns to roots of profession

By Linda Dahdah

LAU's agreements with leading pharmaceutical companies allow its future pharmacists to undergo real life experience

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—Imad Btaiche, interim dean of LAU's School of Pharmacy



Pharmacy students at Benta's labs



LAU President Joseph G. Jabbara and Algorithm's CEO Selim Ghorayeb sign partnership

On February 5, 2015 LAU President Joseph G. Jabbara announced to the LAU community that the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE) had extended the university's Doctor of Pharmacy program's accreditation for eight years. LAU's Pharm.D. program first gained ACPE accreditation in 2002 and still remains the only program outside the U.S. to be ACPE accredited.

But LAU's School of Pharmacy refuses to rest on its laurels. Armed with the excellent reputation of its clinical pharmacy program, it has been going purposefully steadily back to the roots of the discipline. "Globally, there has been a clear focus of pharmacy curricula on the clinical aspect and it is high time we re-balance our programs to also include a part that is dedicated to the pharmaceutical industry," says Imad Btaiche, interim dean of the school.

"While it is important for the students to know which treatment their patients should follow, it is also crucial for them to know everything about the drug they wish to use in the treatment, from its inception to its delivery," Btaiche adds.

Putting words into action, LAU has signed agreements with leading pharmaceutical companies that allow its budding pharmacists to practice in the most modern settings with state-of-the-art equipment.

In April, as LAU celebrated a partnership with the pharmaceutical manufacturer Algorithm, Jabbara underlined that such initiatives go beyond the purely academic and professional framework. "Such partnerships don't only provide young people with the opportunity to succeed, but also to serve society and build our country," he said at the signing ceremony.

This sentiment was echoed by Algorithm's CEO Selim Ghorayeb, who thanked LAU for allowing his company to contribute to the university's mission to further spread knowledge among youth and the community as a whole.

Indeed, LAU first launched its industrial pharmacy program with a joint Experiential Education Agreement that it signed with Benta SAL in June 2012. For Moussa Moussa, plant director at Benta Pharma Industries, the main value the company instills in the students is that of delivering high quality products.

Nadim Atallah, who completed his one-month rotation at Benta in February, couldn't agree more. "This experience in such a professional environment has basically completed the pharmacy education I get in class. I have learned so much about industrial pharmacy mainly in terms of production, but also as far as logistics and regulatory affairs are concerned," Atallah says. The Pharm. D. student goes on to declare, "I got to learn about job opportunities in the field I didn't even know existed in Lebanon."

In line with the school's strategic directives and in response to emerging market needs, the School of Pharmacy is considering establishing a graduate program (master's level) in pharmaceutical sciences, with a focus on industrial pharmacy.

"Such a program will provide pharmacy graduates with added knowledge and skills that prepares them for future career opportunities in the pharmaceutical industry," says Btaiche, adding, "The endeavor will also present a unique opportunity to foster the relationship between academic and industrial pharmacy."