

# Preceptor and Rotation Spotlight - NACDS

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The experiential year to some students means completing their rotations and beginning their career as a pharmacist, but to others who might not have their career figured out, it is year of exploration. I am a student who is not sure where I want my career as a health care professional to go yet. This is why it is so important that students take advantage of their rotations and gain as many experiences as possible.

I knew that one way to do this was to take a chance. Through peers within my pharmacy class, as well as contacts that I met at various meetings, I became very interested in a non-patient care rotation in association management. I did some research and applied for a rotation with The National Association of Chain Drug Stores (NACDS). I completed an application form, a phone interview, and submitted a piece of writing that I had done for a pharmacy management class, and I got it!

I spent five weeks at a rotation that opened my eyes to many different areas of pharmacy. NACDS is located in Alexandria, Virginia, and offers an experience like none other. For a student whose experience lies mostly in community pharmacy, I was able to use both my pharmacology background and my creativity to look at pharmacy through a different set of eyes.

The rotation is very structured. There is a manual and an outline for students to follow as they work through their four or five weeks. This is only meant to be a guide to help students focus in on areas that they are both strong and weak in and work to improve upon them. Within my five weeks, I truly became part of a team and worked with my peers very closely. I attended meetings discussing various topics such as the annual Midyear meeting, sat in on conference calls regarding projects that my department was working on, researched topics and wrote up small and large articles to be put in a newsletter, read current daily articles and researched more into areas of interest, interviewed an employee of NACDS who works in a different department, and most importantly, enhanced the value of the community pharmacist through all of the above.

It is a great idea to take all rotations very seriously. From this rotation alone, I have decided that I may want to complete a residency, and that I want to explore more options for a career in non-patient care. I learned that for pharmacy to grow, you must take a stand for the profession. Students can do this by learning that pharmacy is more than telling a patient to take one pill twice daily. They can do this by getting involved, and working closely with their preceptors.

I truly felt like I had a second home when I was in Virginia, and I am grateful for that. It is important that preceptors remember that students are outside of the classroom learning to be competent pharmacists through their guidance. By leading students, they may be opening new areas of interest for the student.