Area of Concentration in Global Health (ARCO-GH) in the Doctor of Pharmacy (PharmD) Program

Purpose

The purpose of the Area of Concentration in Global Health (ARCO-GH) is to allow students to pursue an area of emphasis within global health consistent with their professional interests and while completing their PharmD degree. The ARCO-GH is intended to give students an in-depth exposure to global health pharmacy practice.

Description

Today’s complex global health problems require solutions grounded in a broad range of disciplines. Pharmacists will practice in a world that expects the pharmacy profession to be patient-oriented and also to contribute to the health of the public at large. Patient-oriented care and population-based care each have a local and a global face. The knowledge and skills of tomorrow’s pharmacists must benefit all segments of populations locally and globally. Much of the world lacks access to basic essential medicines and health care. To better understand these complex challenges, experiences and course work in the context of global health are needed.

Pharmacists with an understanding of the needs of diverse patients and populations can improve the care of patients and their communities. Global health experiences provide a reference to better understand our own health care environment and public health policy.

Global health is an area for study, research, and practice that places a priority on improving health and achieving equity in health for all people worldwide. Global health emphasizes transnational health issues, determinants, and solutions; involves many disciplines within and beyond the health sciences and promotes interdisciplinary collaboration; and is a synthesis of population based prevention with individual-level clinical care. (Koplan JP, Bond TC, Merson, MH, et al. Towards a common definition of global health. Lancet 2009; 373: 1993–95)

It is imperative that pharmacists are aware of their role as health professionals at the global level, and that they have some formal training in the various aspects of the field.

The ARCO-GH in the University of Pittsburgh PharmD curriculum does not require students to take additional credits beyond what is required for the PharmD degree, but rather is a mechanism for students to organize their classroom-based and experiential-based electives and a special project in a focused way. As such, the credits satisfy requirements for both the ARCO-GH and the PharmD degree. The ARCO-GH is available only to students enrolled in the PharmD curriculum.

Students successfully completing the ARCO-GH will receive special recognition at the School of
Pharmacy hooding ceremony and a corresponding notation on their official academic transcript.

The low student/faculty ratio and tailored curriculum of the ARCO-GH offers a special opportunity for students to acquire an important skill set. While new skills may be acquired throughout the School's curriculum, the ARCO-GH is an educational experience that will result in a concentrated background in global health principles.

Skills that students may acquire include the following:

| Access to Medicines          | • Discuss factors related to access to essential medicines on a global basis  
|                             | • Illustrate an ethical standard for the provision of pharmaceutical care in low-resource settings.  
|                             | • Implement an assessment of medication related needs either locally or in an international setting.  
| Health Policy, Advocacy, and Health Systems | • Discuss the global burden of disease, global disease patterns, and the impact of highly prevalent diseases (including major established infectious and tropical diseases) on public health and social policy.  
|                             | • Describe the role of the pharmacist as an advocate in global health.  
|                             | • Compare and contrast the health systems of other nations with that of the U.S.  
|                             | • Discuss the efforts of other countries to finance and provide health care services, prevent disease, promote health, and train health care providers.  
|                             | • Educate colleagues (other students) about the special needs of an underserved population.  
| Cultural Sensitivity and Diversity | • Describe the diverse social and cultural differences of populations with whom you have worked.  
|                             | • Demonstrate the ability to provide pharmaceutical care to patients from backgrounds different from your own; this may include the appropriate use of an interpreter.  
| Scholarly Project            | • Demonstrate the ability to think creatively and analytically through completion of an independent, mentored scholarly project in an area of interest related to global health.  

**Academic Requirements**

The ARCO-GH consists of six credits of approved elective classroom-based courses, two APPE rotations in global health, and an approved project conducted under the guidance of an advisor. A minimum of 16 credit hours of coursework and rotations in the ARCO-GH are required.

**Coursework**

Within the School of Pharmacy, courses have been approved for inclusion in the ARCO-GH. Additional courses outside the School of Pharmacy have also been approved. Students may select any combination of approved courses to fulfill the requirements. Additional courses outside the School of Pharmacy may also be accepted on a case-by-case basis with prior
approval of the ARCO-GH oversight group, the course director, and the School of Pharmacy Curriculum Committee. If a student desires to have another course approved for inclusion in ARCO-GH, he or she must submit a request to the ARCO-GH coordinator with the course description and intended outcomes that will be fulfilled by the course to begin the review and approval process.

Approved School of Pharmacy courses include:
• Pharmaceutical Care to Underserved Populations (PHARM 5801) – 3 credits
• Global Health: Determinants and Application (PHARM 5814) - 3 credits
• Special Projects (PHARM 5800) – 1 to 3 credits

Approved courses outside the School of Pharmacy include:
• BIOINF 2124: Principles of Global Health Informatics – 3 credits
• INCIGHT (Interdisciplinary Curriculum in Global Health Training)
  o Concepts and Methods in Global Health (PUBHLT 2025) – 2 credits
  o Global Health Policy and Development (PIA 2532) – 3 credits
  o Transforming Global Health Education into Action (LAW 5134) – 2 credits

**Experiential Rotations**

As part of the ARCO-GH, students must complete two advanced pharmacy practice experiences (APPEs) in the area of global health, each representing 5 credits. It important to clarify that the ARCO-GH rotations are not additional APPEs, but rather the students must select two rotations with a focus on aspects of global health from the existing list of approved rotations to satisfy the ARCO-GH requirement. Students are encouraged to consult the director of experiential learning and faculty from the oversight group for guidance on which rotations will qualify for the ARCO-GH. An approved rotation must fulfill one or more of the skills outlined above.

For previously unapproved rotations, an application must be submitted with a written overview of the site, expected learning outcomes, and anticipated experiences to the School of Pharmacy director of experiential learning. Approval of new rotations to fulfill requirements for the ARCO-GH is at the discretion of the director of experiential education and the ARCO-GH coordinator or oversight group.

Students accepted for participation in the ARCO-GH will be given preferential placement in APPEs in the area of global health.

**Project**

As part of the ARCO-GH, students must complete a project under the supervision of a faculty member. Once accepted into the ARCO-GH, students will meet with the ARCO-GH coordinator to discuss suitable project ideas and identify faculty mentors. While the project is required, completing it “for credit” is not. Students may elect to work on the project for credit by enrolling in a Special Topics or Independent Study course. Students should consult the School of Pharmacy registrar for enrollment information for Special Topics courses. To enroll in a Special Topics course students must receive approval from the chair of the School of Pharmacy Curriculum Committee. Projects need not be based in an international setting, but must have either global health implications or a focus on health disparities and health equity. Students must
have their project proposed and approved by the ARCO-GH coordinator and project preceptor prior to the beginning of the P4 year. Project assessment will be based on a formal presentation to the oversight group and a written report. Students are encouraged to present their work at local, national, and international conferences (PPA, ASHP, etc).

Student Application Process

The ARCO-GH is not able to accommodate all interested students due to resource limitations. As a result, enrollment in the ARCO-GH is not guaranteed and is only open to 6 students per class. Students interested in pursuing this concentration are required to apply to the program. The application process requires a(an):

- Letter of intent, including a discussion of the anticipated value of the ARCO to desired career
- Professional portfolio, including résumé or curriculum vitae
- Permission for the oversight group to review the applicant’s University of Pittsburgh academic transcript
- Interview with at least one member of the oversight group, if requested by the oversight group

Within the PharmD curriculum, classroom-based elective courses are taken in the P3 year. To facilitate selection of targeted courses and research rotations, the deadline for applications is February 15 during the P2 year. Students will be notified regarding the status of their application prior to registration for the fall term of the P3 year. Complete applications will be screened by a minimum of two members of the ARCO-GH oversight group.

Members of the ARCO-GH oversight group are available to answer questions and discuss the ARCO-GH program. Contact information is provided below.

ARCO-GH Oversight Group

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