

# Fellowship Spotlight

## PharmDs gain valuable experience through UNC/PPD Drug Development Fellowships

### WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

*A look at the current employment of some UNC/PPD fellows:*

**Angela Donahue, PharmD**

1997–1999 Fellow  
Associate Director, Project Management  
PPD in RTP



**Naumann Chaudry, PharmD**

1999–2001 Fellow  
Director of U.S. Regulatory Affairs  
Pfizer, Inc.



**Aliou Ousmanou, PharmD**

2001–2003 Fellow  
Senior Project Manager, Clinical Operations  
PPD in RTP



**Pinal Shah, PharmD**

2002–2004 Fellow  
Project Manager, Clinical Operations  
PPD in RTP



**Nabil Uddin**

Manager, Product Development  
PPD in Austin, Texas

When Shriya Bhushan graduated from pharmacy school, she knew she wanted to work in the pharmaceutical industry, but she was unsure which of the many residency and fellowship opportunities would be best for her. Then she learned about the UNC/PPD Drug Development Fellowship Program.

“After looking through all the program descriptions and interviewing at ASHP for three days straight, I figured I really liked what this particular fellowship had to offer in terms of the extensive ground it covered,” says Bhushan, currently a first-year fellow in the program.

Started in 1997 as a way to train PharmD graduates for careers in drug development, the UNC/PPD Drug Development Fellowship has proven to be a successful program for training pharmacists in clinical research. Seven people have completed the two-year fellowship, and the program has been so successful that last year the number of fellows was increased to two per year.

The program, a joint effort by the School of Pharmacy and PPD, provides distinctive experiences during each year of the fellowship. PPD is a leading global contract research organization providing discovery, development, and post-approval services as well as compound partnering programs to the biopharmaceutical industry.

Fellows spend their first year at UNC working on several clinical research projects with a faculty member.

“The fellows, during that first year, get a real-world, hands-on experience in conducting clinical research,” says Bob Dupuis, PharmD, director of clinical research and drug development fellowships in the School and a clinical associate professor in the Division of Pharmacotherapy and Experimental Therapeutics.

Fellows have the opportunity to develop protocols; obtain appropriate approvals and funding; recruit and monitor patients or subjects; and gather, analyze, present, and publish data. Some fellows also teach classes or mentor fourth-year pharmacy students. In addition, they are allowed to enroll in courses such as biostatistics, clinical trials design, pharmacogenomics, advanced pharmacokinetics, or epidemiology to supplement their training.

Thomas Cho ('06 PharmD) spent the first year of his fellowship working with Herb Patterson, PharmD, an associate professor and vice chair of the Division of Pharmacotherapy and Experimental Therapeutics in the School. He helped Patterson work on industry-sponsored protocols through the UNC Heart Failure Program, treating patients and recruiting for research studies where appropriate. He says the experience helped him understand the nuts and bolts of the drug development work that happens in the academic setting.

“You really get to see the whole spectrum of what’s going on on the academic side,” Cho says.



*Aliou Ousmanou, center, discusses the benefits of the UNC/PPD Drug Development Fellowship with current fellow Thomas Cho ('06 PharmD), left, and Pinal Shah. Ousmanou and Shah, who both work as project managers at PPD, currently direct the fellowship program.*

The second year of the fellowship is spent primarily at PPD in Morrisville, where fellows are exposed to many aspects of work in a contract research organization. The year is divided into longitudinal competency areas—orientation/business development; clinical project management; data management, biostatistics, and medical writing—and an elective. The elective is designed to allow the fellow to customize the experience based on his or her interests and goals.

Currently in his second year, Cho manages sites for a cardiovascular study at PPD. His role requires him to travel to different hospitals around the country, and he says his academic training at UNC last year has helped him do a better job of conducting these trials.

“We’re really trying to provide a well-rounded experience and at the same time tailor the fellowship to the fellow’s interest,” says Aliou Ousmanou, a former fellow and senior project manager at PPD who now directs the fellowship program with another former fellow, Pinal Shah. “We want to provide a good experience and ensure they

get what they want out of the program.”

Nabil Uddin, now a manager in product development at PPD in Austin, Texas, completed his PPD fellowship in 2006. He says that the collaborative nature of the drug development industry is reflected in the fellowship experience.

“The development of medicines will always require the partnership of academia and industry,” Uddin says. “The UNC Drug Development Fellowship affords the fellow to gain experience in drug development on both sides of this partnership, gaining a complete perspective of what it takes to develop medicines.”

First-year fellow Tedi Soule was attracted to the fellowship because of the broad scope of the program.

“Since PPD is a contract research organization, you get to see so many different types of research and meet so many people in different areas, as opposed to a big pharmaceutical company where you might be working in one specific therapeutic area,” Soule says.

Shah, who completed her fellowship in 2004 and is now a project manager in clinical

operations at PPD, also says the fellowship appealed to her because of the opportunities a large company such as PPD can provide. In Shah’s case, the experience took on global meaning.

“Because our company’s so large, I had the opportunity to go to PPD’s Cambridge, UK, office,” Shah says. “I learned a ton and was able to do a lot with regulations for European countries. Being a manager now, I have a better understanding of what it takes to get drugs approved in these countries.”

Ousmanou cites the incredible growth in the pharmaceutical industry as one reason for the many opportunities PPD can offer fellows, and he says that there is definitely a good market for PharmDs who want to pursue clinical research. He and Shah say the fellowship program is very successful because of the vibrant industry as well as the administrative support the program receives from PPD’s CEO and founder, Fred Eshelman.

“This is a great opportunity for PharmDs,” Ousmanou says. “And without Dr. Eshelman’s support, this program would not exist in this company.”