

# Pharmacy Informatics specialist or tech-savvy generalist?



American Society of  
Health-System Pharmacists®  
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## The more you know about pharmacy informatics, the better pharmacist you'll be.

You are a member of the new, technology-savvy breed of pharmacy students. Whether you consider yourself a technophile, a technophobe, or somewhere in between, you know that the information technology revolution is changing health care for the better.

Through pharmacy informatics, pharmacists employ health information and communications technology to develop systemized approaches to patient care using evidence-based medicine and other clinical decision-making tools.

Computerized Provider Order Entry (CPOE), e-prescribing, telepharmacy, bedside bar coding, electronic medication administration records (eMARs), automated dispensing cabinets, inventory management systems, smart pumps, robotic IV automation, and other innovations are improving medication use and patient safety.

### Informatics Specialist or Tech-Savvy Generalist?

If you love IT and see yourself helping to shape the future of health information technology, you may decide to choose informatics as your career specialty. Simply put, a pharmacy informaticist is a pharmacist who understands the technology as well as the medication use life cycle. He or she has a Pharm.D. and is ideally residency-trained, and may have a second degree in business, health administration, or information technology.

But no matter what your eventual choice of specialty, if you're going to practice pharmacy, you will use informatics to make decisions, enhance safety, increase efficiency and improve patient outcomes.

Make it your mission to learn all you can now in the classroom. Join ASHP as a member of the Pharmacy Student Forum<sup>SM</sup> and get involved in the Section of Pharmacy Informatics and Technology<sup>SM</sup>. When it's time, think about doing a Residency in Informatics.

Because the more you know about pharmacy informatics, the better pharmacist you'll be.

*"Because Pharmacy Informatics is a relatively new career path, sometimes people pigeonhole an Informatics Pharmacist as someone who can troubleshoot hardware and software issues. But if all I knew were the technology, I would be nothing more than a technical support person. Being a pharmacist enables me to understand the entire process and the context within which the technology will be used. The greatest reward of my job is knowing that my decisions have a profound effect throughout the health care organization. In configuring just one medication record, I affect everyone who touches that record—from how the medication is prescribed to how it is ultimately administered to the patient."*

Dr. P. Neil Edillo, Pharm.D.  
Informatics Pharmacist  
Oregon Health & Science University  
Portland, Oregon

*"Pharmacy informatics helped me combine my passion for designing and developing tools and software with my love of pharmacy. The opportunities in pharmacy informatics are endless. Electronic health records are allowing us to capture and enormous amount of data. Now it is up to us to find ways to make this data useful and improve clinical decision support and patient safety."*

Jennifer Boehne, Pharm.D.  
SMDC Pharmacy Resident  
Masters in Health Informatics Candidate 2008

## How to Learn More About Informatics

### Seek out the experts on campus and online.

All schools of Pharmacy are required to incorporate informatics within their curriculum. Some provide elective courses. Be sure to find out what's available and make the most of what your campus offers.

*You can also order helpful references and guides, including Health Care Informatics: A Skill Based Resource and The Pharmacy Informatics Primer, online at [www.ashp.org/bookstore](http://www.ashp.org/bookstore), or at 866-279-0681.*

### Join ASHP.

ASHP is the largest organization of hospital and health-system pharmacists, with more than 35,000 members and a 60-year record of leadership, influence and accomplishment.

When you join ASHP, you automatically become a member of ASHP's Pharmacy Student Forum, a group of 8,000 students who represent the new generation of pharmacists in clinical practice. You can also join ASHP's Section of Pharmacy Informatics and Technology<sup>SM</sup> at no extra fee. You'll have access to critical information, informed opinion, solid career advice, and connections that only a network of experts, advocates and peers can provide.

*Find out how ASHP membership can make a difference to your career, starting now! See "Sections and Forums" at [www.ashp.org](http://www.ashp.org).*

*"Pharmacy informatics is the scientific field that focuses on medication-related data and knowledge within the continuum of health care systems—including its acquisition, storage, analysis, use and dissemination—in the delivery of optimal medication-related patient care and health outcomes."*

Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society (HIMSS), October 2006

### Want to specialize in Informatics? Consider a residency.

There are many valuable career advantages in doing a residency. Among them is learning how to apply the knowledge and skills you've learned in school in real-world health systems, managed care, or community settings. You get the chance to work with patients as part of an interdisciplinary team, sharpen your critical thinking skills, learn the subtleties of leadership, and focus on your specialty.

The experiences you have as a resident can't be found in the classroom or during undergraduate experiential training. They are unique to residencies, and help set you apart from your peers as you advance your career.

ASHP-accredited residency programs meet rigorous national training standards and have been reviewed by expert site survey teams.

*Learn more about ASHP-accredited pharmacy residencies and how to apply at "Accreditation," [www.ashp.org](http://www.ashp.org), or call ASHP's Accreditation Services Division at 301-659-3000.*

*"The residency has been a great help to my career development. The first year residency helped me to get a better clinical background and the second year helped me to learn more about project management and how essential it is to work in collaboration with other disciplines to have a successful implementation. I also learned more about the non-clinical side of informatics such as software development and business plans for new systems."*

Alan Chung, Pharm.D.  
Pharmacy Informatics Resident  
Vanderbilt Medical Center  
Nashville, Tennessee

## How to learn more about pharmacy informatics.

- ✔ Talk with the Informatics professor at your school; seek out and interview working professionals.
- ✔ Take any didactic informatics electives your school offers.
- ✔ Try to think “out of the box” to distinguish human error from technological malfunction.
- ✔ Ask questions about the technology used in the pharmacy environment in which you may work.
- ✔ Join ASHP’s Section of Pharmacy Informatics and Technology<sup>SM</sup> and get on its Listserv.
- ✔ Find a mentor in ASHP’s MentorExchange, one who is focused on pharmacoinformatics.
- ✔ Consider an elective experiential rotation focusing on pharmacy informatics.
- ✔ When evaluating PGY-1 Residencies, look for an institution with elective rotations in informatics or sites with a PGY-2 Informatics Pharmacy Residency.

Whether you eventually decide to specialize in Pharmacy Informatics or not, you will have new tools and skills that will help you improve medication safety and patient care. And you’ll be at the forefront of using technology to facilitate change in the practice of pharmacy.

## Students who want to succeed join ASHP.

As a student member of the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists, you can be in two places at once: in school and well on your way to a rewarding career.

At graduation, ASHP student members have a distinct advantage. It’s called a flying start.

For details, see the Student Section of ASHP’s website: [www.ashp.org/student](http://www.ashp.org/student). Apply for membership online and save 5%!