

In the Spotlight – October 2009



Joan E. Kapusnik-Uner, Pharm.D., FCSHP
Manager Disease Decision Support
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Bio

Joan Kapusnik-Uner is the Manager of the Disease Decision Support Group for First DataBank's National Drug Data File (NDDF Plus). She is also an Associate Professor of Clinical Pharmacy at the University of California San Francisco (UCSF) School of Pharmacy, teaching within the Pharmacology and Pharmacy Informatics curriculum. Prior to coming to [First DataBank](#), Joan practiced for thirteen years as a Clinical Pharmacist at San Francisco General Hospital on the Infectious Disease Service and in an Outpatient HIV Clinic at UCSF. Her academic research included animal-model studies that laid the groundwork for aminoglycoside single-daily dosing and an implementation of one of the first antibiotic order form control systems. Her post-graduate training included a Pharm.D. degree from UCSF, a Clinical Pharmacy Residency at the University of Illinois, Chicago, and an Infectious Disease Residency and Pharmacokinetics Fellowship at UCSF.

Area of Pharmacy Practice

Joan's training in infectious disease, along with her use of computer systems to keep track of patients is how she fell into the informatics side of pharmacy practice. She has spent the last thirteen years learning about drug knowledge base design, content creation and implementations. Throughout her time at First DataBank, her role has expanded and she has had the opportunity to participate in multiple projects that have utilized her technical and clinical expertise. Another role she took on some ten years ago is participation in informatics standards including the Health Level 7 (HL7), a data transmission consensus standards organization. HL7 fostered the creation of the National Library of Medicine's [RxNORM](#) project; which has become our national interoperability drug terminology. She continues to collaborate with the National Library of Medicine on the RxNORM project.

Role

Joan manages a group of pharmacists that capture drug information events such as new product

releases or FDA MedWatch Safety alerts. This drug information is then assessed, codified and incorporated within drug knowledge bases such as Drug Indications, Drug- Disease Contraindications, and Lactation, Geriatric or Pregnancy Precautions. They are constantly developing new content for new users and new systems. Over the years they have expanded to include new users, such as physicians.

Innovations

Innovations have come from the challenges of needing to stay current regarding new drug information, especially due to the dynamic nature of how drug knowledge change events or trigger events are published. Content must be reliably captured, consistently assessed against editorial policy for inclusion and processed into drug knowledge rule sets that will generate alerts for clinically appropriate drug products.

Opportunities available to Pharmacists Interested in Informatics

Pharmacists are well positioned to formulate local evidence criteria; to collect information on medication therapy outcomes; and to bring together institutional health providers for the purpose of setting priorities and targeted outcomes where select Information Technology interventions are made.

Advice

Joan's Clinical Pharmacy practice experience was essential to her becoming a subject matter expert for drug knowledge base design and creation. Her initial technical knowledge and experience was minimal. There is great need for experienced pharmacists to participate in making drug knowledge more relevant for specific, local clinical settings; that is customizing content based on local consensus and established evidence criteria. Joan believes you should stay true to the pharmacy profession by first becoming a subject matter expert. This can be done through a clinical residency and then pursuing a specialty/2nd year Informatics residency. "Invest the time upfront to become subject matter expert to help design systems to treat patients, and then you can transition into the informatics side," says Joan. In addition, for those interested in a 2nd career opportunity, making the transition to informatics is a perfect choice because you would draw directly from your clinical expertise.

The Value of ASHP Membership

"Having such a large ASHP membership facilitates information exchange and collaborations. The annual meeting events have given me the ongoing, life-long educational experiences that have been necessary for me to evolve within my profession. The SOPIT group has been well organized and has executed opinions that have had significant influence and impact."