



In the Spotlight

Name: Thomas E. Kirschling, PharmD, MS

Title: Manager, Pharmacy Operations, Adjunct Instructor

Work Location: University of Pittsburgh Medical Center,
Pittsburgh, PA

University of Pittsburgh School of Pharmacy, Pittsburgh, PA

His Story

Tom received his Doctor of Pharmacy from the University of Wisconsin in 2004. Upon graduation he completed a 2 year combined Pharmacy Administration Residency/Masters Program at the University of Wisconsin Hospital earning a Master of Science in Health System Pharmacy Administration from the University of Wisconsin in 2006. At the completion of his residency Tom assumed the position of Manager, Pharmacy Operations at the Presbyterian campus of the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and Adjunct Instructor in the University of Pittsburgh School of Pharmacy. Tom's main areas of interest and oversight currently include pharmacy automation and robotics, operating room pharmacy satellites, storage and security of controlled substances, and renovation of the main central pharmacy, which was formerly an area of his oversight. At the School of Pharmacy he lectures on a variety of topics including leadership, finance, quality improvement and pharmacy automation. Additionally, Tom has completed his Six Sigma Green Belt Training from Motorola University, is currently pursuing a Master of Studies degree in Law from the University of Pittsburgh and will be attending the Pharmacy Leadership Institute at Boston University in 2010.

Interestingly, Tom did not start out his college career intending to be a pharmacist. Originally he was studying to be a Chemical Engineer but didn't find it to suit his personality. During his investigation of the engineering profession, however, he found that Chemical Engineers make great spouses; he is happily married to a Chemical Engineer. Tom's people focus and desire to work on complex health care issues led him to pharmacy and ultimately to health system pharmacy administration.

The Facility

UPMC Presbyterian-Shadyside, a tertiary academic teaching hospital, is licensed for approximately 1200 beds and has a pharmacy staff of over 250. The hospital is part of the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC) a \$7 billion organization consisting of 20 hospitals, 400 doctors' offices and outpatient sites, and dozens of freestanding cancer centers, rehabilitation centers, imaging centers, and senior living facilities. UPMC partners with the University of Pittsburgh Schools of the Health Sciences – ranked sixth in National Institutes of Health funding – in the areas of research and education. UPMC operates a transplant facility in Italy, two cancer centers and a hospital in Ireland, and an emergency medical system in Qatar, and recently announced the addition of two facilities in Cyprus. UPMC is a leader in IT, with partnerships with GE Healthcare, IBM, and Alcatel-Lucent. UPMC has advanced the quality and efficiency of health care and is consistently ranked among “America’s Best Hospitals” by *U.S. News & World Report*.

Significant Projects

During his time at UPMC, Tom has been leading innovation in pharmacy operations. This has included adding a second RobotRx robot running off a single information system (a national first), creating novel strategies to optimize pharmacy automation, developing renovation plans for a new central pharmacy with capacity for sterile product preparation robots, and moving towards a paperless environment. Most recently Tom has been focused on incorporating Automated Decision Support (ADS) software into the organizations narcotic diversion detection strategy.

Tom is also focused on teaching and education in the department, at the school of pharmacy, and at professional meetings. His current studies at the University of Pittsburgh School of Law have provided him the expert knowledge to speak on topics such as employment discrimination, torts, and labor law with internal and external audiences.

One of Tom’s proudest accomplishments was chairing the 2009 Pennsylvania Society of Health System Pharmacists (PSHP) annual assembly. Working without a programming budget he was able to host a robust and successful meeting with diverse programming. By recruiting presenters from within the state Tom created a meeting that proved successful and built sustained involvement in PSHP from presenters and attendees.

Advice for New Managers

Tom feels the best advice he can give new managers is to make sure they focus on relationship building by being present and engaged with the staff. If a manager wants to become an effective leader it is important that they build a strong connection and give back to the people who will ultimately make you successful.

Value of ASHP

Tom is an active member of both the American Society of Health System Pharmacists (ASHP) and the PSHP. His ASHP responsibilities include Chair for the Council on Pharmacy Management, Member of the Programming Committee for the Section of Pharmacy Practice Managers, and Programming Associate for the midyear clinical meeting. As a member of PSHP he is currently serving as President for the Western Pennsylvania Chapter and as a PSHP Board Member at Large. He served as chair for the 2009 PSHP Annual Assembly.

Tom feels that ASHP membership has provided him with a vital support network that has facilitated his professional development. He has been able to connect with a talented and diverse membership willing to share ideas and learn from each other. Another benefit of ASHP membership is the ability to have an impact larger than your current organization. Through his work on Councils and in the Section of Practice Managers Tom has been able to impact the practice of pharmacy administration on a broad scale.