In the Spotlight

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International Outreach Efforts Yield Collaborations

This November the College of Pharmacy’s Division of Nontraditional Education and Outreach (NTEO), along with UGA’s Center for Global Health at the College of Public Health, welcomed a cardiac physician from China as part of the newly created Visiting Scholars Program. Jinping Wang, M.D., a senior physician at the Department of Cardiology at Daqing First Hospital in Daqing, China, will be participating in a six-month postdoctoral fellowship in disease management. She will be working under the direction of Richard Schuster and Colleen O’Brien Cherry in the College of Public Health and Paul Brooks and Trina von Waldner in the College of Pharmacy.

“Wang will collaborate with UGA faculty to create a China-based disease management practice program to target populations with chronic diseases,” said Paul Brooks, the College’s assistant dean for Nontraditional Education and Outreach (NTEO).

Among other objectives Wang will focus on optimal ways to identify populations that benefit most from disease management approaches, understand and apply evidence-based practice guidelines, and incorporate patient self-management and education into daily practice for optimal outcomes, he added.

The visit is one component of a two-year-long collaboration with Chinese officials and healthcare professionals that involves training healthcare workers in disease state management and improving standards for pharmaceutical drug development.

For example, a six-hour web-based instruction program was developed by the colleges of Pharmacy and Public Health with a $110,160 grant from Pfizer, Inc. “Disease Management 101—A primer to understanding the disease management process regarding world markets” was designed to provide the fundamentals of disease management for medical staff located in the emerging markets of China, India, Russia, Brazil, Mexico and Turkey, according to Brooks.

“As these countries develop economically, more chronic health problems will emerge, creating demands on the health care systems that will require better chronic disease prevention programs and an increase in the number of family practice physicians,” noted Brooks, adding that during the past year a workshop was held in China that provided live training for 500 physicians at 15 distance learning sites on chronic diseases such as hypertension, cholesterol, coronary artery disease and stroke.

“Pfizer has a vested interest in assuring that physicians have the necessary prescribing information, while realizing that adherence to medication regimens is very low and refilling prescriptions can be difficult. Patients access to family practice physicians and the efficient handling of patients are critical,” affirmed von Waldner, director of pharmacy continuing education. “The goal is to help increase awareness among physicians about evidence-based medicine through professional publications and programs.”

Initial contact for collaborations between the College of Pharmacy and the Chinese government began in 2010 when NTEO’s Regulatory Affairs Program sought to form a partnership with Fudan University in Shanghai that would help China develop a program of regulatory standards for pharmaceuticals and devices that would match those in the United States and other developed nations.

“Since most large multinational pharmaceutical companies use ingredients manufactured in various countries, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration strives to assure that all products from foreign countries meet our standards,” said Brooks. “Therefore we initiated contact with regulatory officials in China to promote the need for training and education of professionals involved in the manufacturing process.”

The result was a partnership with Fudan for the College of Pharmacy to develop a distance learning program, based on the College’s graduate education program in regulatory affairs, with content relevant to U.S. and China. A memorandum of agreement that was signed by UGA President Michael Adams supported the new training program and facilitated the exchange of students and faculty between both countries.

“With the combined successes of the regulatory affairs and disease management programs and now the Visiting Scholars program, we anticipate continued support from Pfizer and increased contact with Fudan for education and research,” added Brooks.