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FIP - IPA PHARMACIST VACCINATION TRAINING PROGRAM

India started the PharmD program that specializes in graduating clinically trained pharmacists. However, it continues to recognize as registered pharmacists – students graduating with diploma [2- year program], Bachelor [4-year program] and PharmD [6-year program], and that has resulted in confusion among a large segment of the society that is unable to understand the role of pharmacy profession and how they could contribute to improved outcome in patient care. Pharmacist in India now actively engage in a multifaceted spectrum of responsibilities, showcasing their expertise in not only managing medications but also educating patients. This expanded role is cultivating a healthcare environment that prioritizes safety of the community.

In few countries around the world pharmacists are involved in vaccination which lessens the burden on nurses and doctors. By pharmacist vaccinating, vaccination effectively covers a larger population and reaches a larger audience in a shorter amount of time, making it very effective in containing many vaccine preventable disease. Pharmacist in India do not have the license to vaccinate yet. To enhance

the skill of pharmacists and pharmacy students (Pharm D) on the fundamentals of vaccination, the Indian Pharmaceutical Association (IPA) and the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) organized a training program. This is the first initiative of its kind to train pharmacists to become vaccinators in India. This two-day hands-on training was held in Karnataka, in southern India. This event was hosted by Bangalore Baptist Hospital (BBH), Hebbal in collaboration with Karnataka College of Pharmacy. The trainers who traveled from Australia to lead our two-day training program were Drs. Carl Schneider and Jane Hanrahan. They are actively involved in vaccination programs that are conducted in Australia.

My college professor, Dr. Lita Susan Thomas, and I both attend this program. We were instructed by the FIP-IPA team to complete a comprehensively prepared module on vaccines and vaccination prepared by Dr Jane. It was a prerequisite that needed to be fulfilled before beginning the training course. These modules covered various topics – such as, basics on immunity, vaccination and public health, common vaccines in India and storage and handling of the vaccines. After the modules were completed, we received a confirmation indicating the date of our vaccination training program.

We were part of the second batch and the program was conducted on 6th and 7th of December 2023. On the first day, we were given hands on training on how to vaccinate various vaccines. We were taught how to draw and prepare our syringes for vaccination. With great patience, our instructors taught us how to administer vaccines subcutaneously and intramuscularly. Instruction provided was of practical nature and showed us how to set up a vaccination area and handle the vaccination procedure in a center. We were first instructed to inject on arm pads, and at the conclusion of the day, our proficiency with the technique was assessed. The evaluation was thorough. We had



to demonstrate to the instructors how to set up a vaccination area and how to vaccinate one another via SC and IM. We were assessed based on this, and if the requirements were satisfied, we were granted a certification for the vaccination skill.

On day two of the training, a team of doctors and nurses from BBH's Emergency department spent the first half of the day discussing Basic Life Support. We received instruction on CPR and many forms of first aid that we could use in different emergency scenarios. There was also a hands-on training session on how to perform CPR on a half body CPR training model. Our program to train the trainer took up the second half of the day. This session was on how we could effectively train another pharmacist on how to vaccinate.

Following the completion of this program, one will be competent to administer vaccinations under the guidance of a registered physician who has confidence in our abilities. Since Indian pharmacists currently lack the licensure to provide vaccinations, we must act under supervision of a physician to perform vaccination.

This program's long-term goal is to train at least ten additional pharmacists and provide them with the tools they need to learn this skill. This endeavor was unique in its approach and effectively imparted to us a crucial skill required of a pharmacist. Being a part of this program and one of the 45 students in India to receive this training was an amazing experience and honor.

My goal as a student is to educate other pharmacists the expertise of immunization after completing this training program. This is possible only with the help of the team that organized this event. Our secondary objective is to locate a licensed physician who can

recognize pharmacists as vaccine providers and allow us to hone our expertise.

This would never be possible without the tremendous support of Mrs Manasi Joshi (FIP academic section executive committee member), Mr Raj Vaidya (Project manager and lead of FIP-IPA pharmacist vaccination) and Ms Manjiri Gharat . Special thanks to Dr. Karthik Rakam for contacting our university about this fantastic event, which prompted our participation.

