

Area of Concentration in Geriatrics & Palliative Care (ARCO-GPC) in the Doctor of Pharmacy (PharmD) Program

Purpose

The purpose of the Area of Concentration in Geriatrics and Palliative Care (ARCO-GPC) is to allow students to pursue an area of emphasis with geriatrics and palliative care consistent with their professional interests during their Doctor of Pharmacy (PharmD) education. The ARCO-GPC is intended to give students an in-depth exposure to geriatrics and palliative care pharmacy practice.

Description

“Geriatrics” is a specialized branch of medicine dealing with the health and care of older adults. Older adults have special healthcare needs; more than half of adults age 65 and older have 3 or more complex comorbid medical problems, such as heart disease, diabetes, arthritis, hypertension, or Alzheimer's disease. Geriatric care aims to prevent and treat diseases and disabilities in older adults.

“Palliative care” is specialized medical care for people living with serious illness. It focuses on providing relief from the symptoms and stress of a serious illness. The goal is to improve quality of life for both the patient and the family. Palliative care is delivered by a team of palliative care providers who work together with a patient’s other medical providers to offer an extra layer of support. It is appropriate at any age and at any stage in a serious illness and can be provided along with curative treatment.” Palliative care providers focus on the management of pain and other symptoms, and advance care planning.

Academic Requirements

The ARCO-GPC consists of six credits of approved elective classroom-based courses, two Advanced Pharmacy Practice Experiences (APPEs), and an approved project conducted under the guidance of an advisor. A minimum of 16 credit hours of coursework and rotations in the ARCO-GPC are required.

Coursework

Within the School of Pharmacy, courses have been approved for inclusion in the ARCO-GPC. Additional courses outside the School of Pharmacy may also be accepted on a case-by-case basis with prior approval of the ARCO-GPC oversight group, the course director, and the School of Pharmacy Curriculum Committee. If a student pharmacist desires to have another course approved for inclusion in ARCO-GPC, they must submit a request to the ARCO-GPC coordinators with the course description and intended outcomes that will be fulfilled by the course to begin the review and approval process. If the requested course has not been previously approved as a School of Pharmacy PharmD elective, the student pharmacist must also submit the syllabus and completed "Request for a Non-School of Pharmacy Course for Elective" document for approval.

Approved School of Pharmacy courses include:

- Community Connector Course (PHARM 1095) – 2 credits
- Introduction to Pharmacoepidemiology (PHARM 2003) – 2 credits
- Clinical Nutrition (PHARM 5811) – 1 credit
- Special Topics (PHARM 5851-5858) – 1 to 3 credits

Approved Professional Electives Outside the School of Pharmacy:

- BCHS 2532 – Dimensions of Aging: Culture and Health – 2 credits
- BIOETH 2001 – Ethics and Aging – 3 credits
- CLRES 2601, 2602 – Principles and Practice of Palliative Care Part 1, Part 2 – 1 credit (each)
- EPIDEM 2004 – Pathophysiology Across the Life Span – 4 credits
- EPIDEM 2900 – Epidemiology of Aging – 2 credits
- GERON 2001 – Ethics and Aging – 3 credits
- GERON 2006 – Multidisciplinary Aspects of Dementia – 3 credits
- GERON 2008 – Human Performance, Nutrition and Aging – 3 credits
- GERON 2011 – Negotiating Grief & Loss in Older Adults – 3 credits
- GERON 2014 – Caregiving in Aging – 3 credits
- NURNP 2526 – MGT: Geriatric Health Theory – 2 credits
- PSY 1230 – Psychology of Death and Dying – 3 credits
- SOC 1307 – Sociology of Health Illness and Disease – 3 credits
- SOC 1450 – Health and Illness – 3 credits

Experiential Rotations

As part of the ARCO-GPC, student pharmacists must complete two APPE experiences (one in geriatrics, and one in palliative care or pain management), each representing 5 credits. It important to clarify that the ARCO-GPC APPE experiences are in addition to the required experiences. Additional experiences (outside the two listed experiences below) may also be accepted on a case-by-case basis with prior approval of the ARCO-GPC oversight group, the course director, and the Director of Experiential Learning. An approved rotation must fulfill one or more of the skills outlined above. For previously unapproved APPE experiences, an application must be submitted with a written overview of the site, expected learning outcomes, and anticipated experiences those previous listed. Approval of new rotations to fulfill requirements for the ARCO-GPC is at the discretion of those listed.

Student pharmacists accepted for participation in the ARCO-GPC will be offered placement opportunities, wherever possible, based on preceptor-provided availability and student preference in the two types of experiences listed below. It is expected, but not required, for accepted student pharmacists to choose one geriatric experience, and one palliative care or pain management experience.

Subtype of Learning Experience	Type of APPE	Site	Location	Preceptor(s)
Geriatrics	Acute Care – Geriatric Focused	WPIC Pharmacy	Pittsburgh, PA	Matthew Joseph
	Ambulatory Care – Geriatric Focused	UPMC Seniorcare –Shadyside	Pittsburgh, PA	Christine Ruby-Scelsi
		UPMC Benedum Geriatrics Clinic	Pittsburgh, PA	Erin Suhrie
		Geisinger Health System	Scranton, PA	Adrienne Nee

		UPMC St. Margaret’s Family Health Centers	Pittsburgh, PA	Heather Sakely
		VA Pittsburgh H.J. Heinz Progressive Care Center	Pittsburgh, PA	Melissa Crawford Stephanie Sodders
	Elective – Geriatrics Focused	Curtis LTC Pharmacy Services	Washington, PA	Joann Seigel
		APPRISE	Pittsburgh, PA	Bill McKendree
		Garda Rx, LLC	Apollo, PA	Martin Garda
Palliative Care	Ambulatory Care – Palliative Care Focused	Duke Homecare and Hospice	Durham, NC	Jessica Crable-Hartman
	Elective – Palliative and Supportive Care	UPMC Palliative and Supportive Institute	Pittsburgh, PA	Jennifer Pruskowski
Pain Management	Ambulatory Care – Pain Management Focused	Geisinger Health System	Mt. Pleasant, PA	Christina Brady
		Geisinger Health System	Wilkes Barre, PA	Justin Troutman
		Geisinger Health System	Danville, PA	Jessica Andersen

Project

As part of the ARCO-GPC, student pharmacists must complete a project under the supervision of a faculty member. Once accepted into the ARCO-GPC, students will meet with the ARCO-GPC coordinators to discuss suitable project ideas and identify faculty mentors. While the project is required, completing it “for credit” is not. Students may elect to work on the project for credit by enrolling in a Special Topics or Independent Study course. Students should consult the School of Pharmacy registrar for enrollment information for Special Topics courses. Projects need not be based in the geriatric or palliative care setting, but must have either geriatric or palliative care implications and/or impact. Student pharmacists must have their project proposed and approved by the ARCO-GPC coordinator and project preceptor prior to the beginning of the P3 year. Project assessment will be based on a formal presentation to the oversight group and a written report. Student pharmacists are encouraged to present their work at local, national, and international conferences (e.g. PPA, ASHP, AGS, AAHPM).

Student Application Process

The ARCO-GPC is not able to accommodate all interested students due to resource limitations. As a result, enrollment in the ARCO-GPC is not guaranteed and is open to generally 4 students per class. Student pharmacists interested in pursuing this concentration are required to apply to the program. The application process requires a(an):

- Letter of intent, including a discussion of the anticipated value of the ARCO to desired career
- Professional portfolio, including résumé or curriculum vitae

- Permission for the oversight group to review the applicant's University of Pittsburgh academic transcript
- Interview with at least one member of the oversight group, if requested by the oversight group

The ARCO-GPC accepts applications for student pharmacists in both the P1 and P2 year. The deadline for applications is generally in the spring term and is posted annually. Student pharmacists will be notified regarding the status of their application prior to registration for the fall term. Complete applications will be screened by a minimum of two members of the ARCO-GPC oversight group. When the ARCO-GPC is not at full enrollment capacity following a given application period, the ARCO-GPC coordinators may elect, at a later date, to consider acceptance of students who come to career goals later in his/her academic career but are committed to the specific career path and who submit the required materials (see above). Acceptance is possible only if students can successfully achieve program requirements in the remaining academic periods.

Members of the ARCO-GPC oversight group are available to answer questions and discuss the ARCO-GPC program. Contact information is provided below.

ARCO-GPC Oversight Group

Co-Coordinator (Sponsor):

[Jennifer A. Pruskowski, PharmD, MS, BCPS, BCPG, CPE](#)

Assistant Professor and Director of Geriatric Research and Education, Division of Geriatric Medicine

Phone: 412-692-2361

Office: Kaufmann Medical Building, Suite 500

Email: jpruskow@pitt.edu

Co-Coordinator (Sponsor):

[Christine Ruby-Scelsi, PharmD BCPS](#)

Assistant Professor

Phone: 412-623-2700

Office: Shadyside North Tower 630

Email: rubyscelsicm@upmc.edu

[Amy L. Seybert, PharmD, FASHP, FCCP, CHSE](#)

Chair of Pharmacy and Therapeutics, Associate Professor

Phone: 412-624-3545

Office: 303 Baum, 8A-1, 5607 Baum Boulevard

Email: seyberta@pitt.edu

[Lucas A Berenbrok, PharmD, MS, BCACP, CTTS](#)

Assistant Professor

Phone: 412-624-8109

Office: 303 Baum, 7A-3, 5607 Baum Boulevard

Email: berenbro@pitt.edu

[Maria Felton Lowry, PharmD, BCPS, BCGP](#)

Assistant Professor

Phone: 412-864-2899

Office: Iroquois Building, Suite 308.15

Email: lowrymf@upmc.edu