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# STUDENTS REFLECT

## Overview: DIA 2012

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Rewind to the fall of 2007, when I was a college freshman excited to begin my quest to obtain my Doctor of Pharmacy degree. In my mind, pharmacy was a career path that was expanding but still mainly restricted to

retail, laboratory and hospital settings. As I progressed through school and introductory hands-on experiences in retail and hospital settings, I began to realize that my skill set and interests could paint a much bigger picture. I had the ambition to understand the pathway a product travels from the time of creation to the time it was given to the patient. My expertise in medications could not only affect the surrounding community but affect millions worldwide. And while speaking to numerous established

professionals for career advice, all pointed to the DIA Annual Meeting as an invaluable learning experience and stepping stone to a bright career in pharma.

As the Annual Meeting approached, my St. John's classmates and I prepared using the technology and literature DIA provided; we found these to be extremely helpful, especially for "first-timers" not knowing what to expect. The communication between DIA and students should be commended for its accuracy and promptness.

Our three-day experience began with the Student Forum, where we not only learned networking techniques but also practiced among ourselves. It was great to see other students who shared similar goals for their own careers. Throughout the next few days we attended sessions that we felt were pertinent to our future careers. I personally found that some material was overwhelming, which is understandable considering I have little experience with the terminology or work environment. However, it was very impressive that the speakers

answered all questions with the same time and respect no matter who asked. In one session, I found myself asking a question directly after the DIA President, and my question received the same respect and response time as his.

Networking is a skill that cannot be perfected without practice, but students do not have many opportunities to practice networking in a professional setting. At DIA 2012, I did more than just practice: I was able to observe people using proper networking techniques throughout the sessions. This was the first time that I had to use business. cards, and I now understand how crucial they are for a smooth conversation with a new colleague. I also found the speed networking/orientation session to be very useful in meeting many people as well as a good crash course on how to approach someone. Another small yet extremely useful meeting attribute was the SIAC-specific ribbons. I personally have a goal to become a Medical Science Liaison and the specific green ribbon for the Medical Science Liaison SIAC helped me to identify and ask advice from professionals in this field.

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The exhibit hall was a sort of spectacle for a student who has never attended any convention such as this. Although the exhibitors were not particularly looking for students and were more geared to selling their products or services, many of them were willing to help explain what their companies did and potential future opportunities in their company for PharmD professionals such as myself. The number of companies far exceeded my expectations and truly broadened my view beyond the "big name" companies that are always on the news. The SIAC luncheon and ongoing SIAC online communities are also quite valuable to both students and professionals. I look forward to interacting with professionals in my SIAC community to help establish my chosen career path.

The DIA Annual Meeting is something I would highly recommend to anyone even remotely considering a career path in pharma, and I look forward to learning and networking even more in the years to come.





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What regulatory collaboration will look like as we go further into the 21st century was a primary focus at the DIA 2012 Annual Meeting, especially throughout Regulatory Collaboration/ 21st Century Innovation: Views of the Heads of Health Canada, the European

Medicines Agency, and the US FDA (Session 139). This panel discussion addressed some upcoming challenges and steps in regulatory cooperation as well various approaches the agencies employ to meet their domestically-focused mission in our increasingly global environment.

In April 2011, Health Canada updated user fees for its human drugs and medical devices

regulatory programs for the first time in 14 years, explained Paul Glover, MBA (Assistant Deputy Minister, Health Products & Food Branch, Health Canada). Previous funding levels made it difficult for the Agency to efficiently operate, and created numerous backlogs. Parliament, while approving this new fee structure, made it very clear that this structure came with the companion expectation that Health Canada would do a better job.

Health Canada's new operating environment is based on three basic priorities: Remain true to the evidence as a science-based regulatory Agency, and invest in scientific regulatory staff to keep abreast (if not ahead) of an industry that grows increasingly global and complicated; deliver operational excellence; and embrace regulatory modernization in Health Canada's transformation into an Agency that simultaneously reflects its national priorities and the interconnected global industry it regulates.

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