Saint Alphonsus Regional Medical Center
PGY1 Pharmacy Residency Program
Frequently Asked Questions

Find answers to some frequently asked questions as provided by our 2022-2023 PGY1 pharmacy residents: Jeremy, Kate, Marcela and Shay.

- **Why did you pick Saint Alphonsus?**
  - **Kate:** I was looking in the western US for residencies and came across St. Al’s. They had all the main rotations I was looking for, including being able to take emergency medicine and an advanced critical care rotation, and they were a busy trauma center. After interviewing I realized what an amazing place Al’s is. Everyone here is very supportive, wants to make sure we succeed, and wants to help us reach our goals. Knowing that they had great learning experiences and a supportive team of preceptors, I knew that St. Al’s would be a great place to complete my residency training.
  
  - **Marcela:** After graduation, I decided I wanted to stay close to the Mountain West region, and I have always heard great things about Boise and its outdoors. I was looking for a program that offered a wide variety of rotations that allowed me to undergo different areas of patient care and gain unique experiences. St Al’s met my PGY1 program expectations by offering rotations from oncology, ambulatory care, advanced critical care, emergency medicine, and rotations I did not have the opportunity to experience as a student like the NICU. The program allows for flexibility around rotation selection to meet the residents’ goals. I also liked that the program had 4 positions available; which in my experience allows for a broader support group and the opportunity to build a genuine camaraderie during the residency year. St. Al’s friendly and welcoming team has been all I perceived during my interviews; and all staff, from pharmacists, and technicians to interns, have been very supportive throughout my transition from student to a pharmacist.

- **What do you feel like you have gained from your residency experience so far?**
  - **Shay:** In the short four months, I have been challenged each day and pushed outside of my comfort zone; however, from the get-go the program does a great job by establishing a mentor and encouraging the transition from student to pharmacist. The preceptors go far beyond their obligations and encourage/support the residents to take the next step whether that means reaching out to attendings, providing additional opportunities for learning, or allowing residents to staff solely. Also, our RPD and RPC have been more than welcoming and willing to work with us in order to better support our needs.
Jeremy: I have gained so much from this residency, even after being in the program for a few months. There is a great culture here, which fosters an excellent learning environment that has allowed for a smooth transition from student to pharmacist. There is so much information that is learned in school and being able to apply those topics/clinical pearls to the grey area that is actual practice has been rewarding. The support from our RPD, coordinator, and preceptors has maximized my learning and allowed me to gain so much confidence in my own practice.

- Do you feel like you have a good work-life balance? Does your RPD support this?
  o Kate: Work-life balance is always a work in progress for everyone, but I am encouraged to make sure I’m doing well in all aspects of my life, and taking time to have some life outside of work. Natalie definitely supports this culture, and makes sure I’m taking care of my health. Being in Boise is great for people who like the outdoors because you don’t have to go very far to enjoy outdoor activities, and you can take some time to hike, bike, snowboard, etc. without it taking too much time away from your responsibilities. Staffing every fourth weekend is nice because it allows me to have the majority of weekends to recover and work on reading and projects for the upcoming week, and take a little time to go on outdoor adventures or take an afternoon nap.
  o Marcela: I do feel that I am capable of maintaining a healthy work-life balance; staffing every 4th weekend and completing my rotations around 3:30 pm gives me enough time to work on any projects after work and if necessary, during the weekends. RPD and RPC encourage mental health and well-being and make sure you are implementing strategies on a day-to-day basis to prevent burnout.

- How many hours do the residents spend working per week including rotation hours and time spent outside of rotations working on projects?
  o This varies by time of the year and from resident to resident. Most residents typically spend between 50-70 hours per week working.

- Do the residents have scheduled time outside of rotations to work on projects?
  o Residents do not have scheduled time outside of rotations to work on projects. However, most rotations offer time to complete project work assigned during that block. For example, both the MUE and monograph are completed during the required management rotation.

- What do your staffing shifts look like? Do you feel well supported while staffing?
  o Staffing is required every fourth 3-day weekend during which the resident works in the central pharmacy. Staffing starts out with training in the central pharmacy while working to learn the policies, procedures, and processes. Additionally, staff are readily available to help support the resident and to answer questions, particularly in the first few months.
• **What rotation have you enjoyed the most so far?**
  - **Shay:** My favorite rotation so far has been the NICU/labor and delivery rotation. Being a level 3 NICU, you tend to see a wide variety of cases; which provides ample learning opportunities. The preceptors in this rotation take a hands-on teaching approach and residents are encouraged to jump in and actively engage in the decision-making process. The NICU interdisciplinary team is very receptive and welcome pharmacy’s feedback and rely heavily on pharmacy’s expertise as the satellite is located in the NICU.
  - **Jeremy:** My favorite rotation has been critical care. I came into residency with an interest in the ICU and it has only been strengthened since starting. The preceptors are extremely knowledgeable and challenge you to learn the nuances that come with this field. This hospital is one of two Level II Trauma Centers in a 500-mile radius and there are multiple different ICUs here, each with their own complexity. This gives a wide variety of patients and valuable learning opportunities. The rounding team and nursing staff welcome our pharmacy presence and frequently seek help regarding therapy.

• **Are there opportunities for residents to precept and teach student pharmacists?**
  - There are opportunities for residents to work with the Idaho State University College of Pharmacy for guest lectures. Residents may also have opportunities to precept pharmacy students on APPE rotations at Saint Alphonsus.

• **Does the residency program work to incorporate the residents’ interests into rotations and projects?**
  - Yes! There are a wide variety of electives to choose from and preceptors on required rotations will also work with residents to help focus on areas of improvement or areas of interest to help the resident get the most out of their experience.

• **What are resident longitudinal projects like?**
  - The residents’ projects are focused on departmental process improvement and institution initiatives.
    - **Marcela:** My project focuses on evaluating the appropriate selection, dose, and duration of empiric antibiotics for uncomplicated cystitis in urgent care across Saint Alphonsus Health Systems. Saint Alphonsus analyzes its microbiological data annually in both the inpatient and outpatient settings to create a yearly antibiogram based on susceptibility patterns, intending to aid in prescribing empiric antimicrobial therapy. The goal of the study is to provide valuable information the urgent care clinics about current prescribing habits of antibiotics for the treatment of uncomplicated cystitis and antibiogram use.
    - **Kate:** We do a flipped research format, meaning that we finish a project that last year’s residents started, then start our own project in the spring after Midyear. This is a great experience because you get to be involved in all aspects of a
research project, while being able to be involved in two different projects. The research project I am working on right now is looking at productivity, safety, and department perceptions of pharmacy before and after adding an OR pharmacist. This will allow us to see the benefit of the added pharmacist position, as well as areas we can improve upon and projects we can do with that pharmacist.

- **What types of presentations will be given throughout the year, and what type of audience do you typically present to?**
  - There are various opportunities for presentations. All the pharmacy residents from around the Boise area (~20 of us) participate in the Boise Learning and Teaching forum where we present to each other on teaching/learning styles. This forum also helps facilitate additional teaching opportunities with Idaho State University (ISU) and with local pharmacy organization CE events. Presentations are also done at ASHP Midyear and Mountain States conference. Each rotation may also require smaller presentations. So far this year we had the opportunity to present a formal presentation to technicians and pharmacy students at the ISHP fall conference, students at ISU, and multidisciplinary team(s) on select rotations have been completed. There are also committee presentations required for select project work and many informal topic discussions and journal club opportunities with various rotation preceptors.

- **How does the program support residents that want to go on to do a PGY2?**
  - The program is very supportive of residents that want to apply to PGY2 programs. The director and coordinator work with residents to arrange their schedules and choose their projects based on their areas of interest to help them prepare for PGY2 applications. Several past residents have gone on to complete PGY2 programs in areas including infectious disease, ambulatory care, and critical care.

- **Are there any changes to the residency program for next year that I should know about?**
  - The Saint Alphonsus residency program is dynamic and always working to incorporate feedback from preceptors and residents. Recent changes based on feedback include shifting rotation length from 5 to 6 weeks, decreasing the amount of required rotations to allow for more elective opportunities, and moving more of the program requirements for completion into select rotations. The biggest change coming to Saint Alphonsus will be the transition to a new electronic health record (Epic®) in early 2022.