**Area of Concentration in Geriatrics and Palliative Care (ARCO-GPC)**

**Description**

Geriatrics is a specialized branch of medicine focused on the health and care of older adults. Older adults have special health care needs: more than half of adults age 65 and older have 3 or more complex, co-morbid medical problems, such as heart disease, diabetes, arthritis, hypertension, and 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.

**Statement of Need**

There is a need for increased numbers of pharmacists prepared to care for geriatric and palliative care patients due to these rapidly growing populations. According to sources, by mid-century, one in five Americans will be 65 years old or older, and more than 10 million Americans will be over age 85. It is estimated that most of these Americans will suffer from a life-limiting illness, potentially requiring palliative care services. At the core of both of these specialties is the need for the rational use of medications, in accordance with the patient’s individual goals of care, prognosis, functional level, and preferences.

**Implementation into University of Pittsburgh School of Pharmacy Curriculum**

The ARCO-GPC in the University of Pittsburgh PharmD curriculum does not require student pharmacists to take additional credits beyond what is required for the PharmD degree, but rather is a mechanism for student pharmacists to personalize their education through specific desired classroom-based (6 credits) and rotational learning experiences (minimum of 1 rotation in geriatrics and 1 in palliative care or pain management), and a special project conducted under the guidance of an advisor. As such, the credits satisfy requirements for both the ARCO-GPC and the PharmD degree.

**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:

* Current Issues in Geriatric Pharmacotherapy (PHARM XXXX) - 3 credits
* Palliative Care Pharmacotherapy (PHARM XXXX) – 3 credits
* Special Topics (PHARM 5800) – 1 to 3 credits

Approved Professional Electives Outside the School of Pharmacy:

* CAS – PSY 1230 – Psychology of Death and Dying – 3 credits
* CAS – HPS 2698 – Topics in Medical Ethics – 3 credits
* GSPH – EPIDEM 2900 – Epidemiology of Aging – 2 credits
* GSPH – BCHS 2532 – Dimensions of Aging: Culture and Health – 2 credits
* SHRS – HRS 2484 – Issues in Long-Term Care for the Elderly – 3 credits

**Experiential Rotations**

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| **Subtype of Learning Experience** | **Type of APPE** | **Site** | **Location** |
| **Geriatrics** | Acute Care – Geriatric Focused | WPIC Pharmacy | Pittsburgh, PA |
| Ambulatory Care – Geriatric Focused | UPMC Seniorcare –Shadyside | Pittsburgh, PA |
| UPMC Benedum Geriatrics Clinic | Pittsburgh, PA |
| Geisinger Health System | Scranton, PA |
| UPMC St. Margaret’s Family Health Centers | Pittsburgh, PA |
| VA Pittsburgh H.J. Heinz Progressive Care Center | Pittsburgh, PA |
| Elective – Geriatrics Focused | Curtis LTC Pharmacy Services | Washington, PA |
| APPRISE  | Pittsburgh, PA |
| Garda Rx, LLC | Apollo, PA |
| **Palliative Care** | Ambulatory Care – Palliative Care Focused | Duke Homecare and Hospice | Durham, NC |
| Elective – Palliative and Supportive Care | UPMC Palliative and Supportive Institute | Pittsburgh, PA |
| **Pain Management** | Ambulatory Care – Pain Management Focused | Geisinger Health System | Mt. Pleasant, PA |
| Geisinger Health System | Wilkes Barre, PA |
| Geisinger Health System | Danville, PA |

**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 course. 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.

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