Frequently Asked Questions

What clinical activities do EM Pharmacists participate in within the Emergency Department?
Our pharmacists are incredibly hands-on! We participate in the care of our patients at the bedside and are sought out for treatment recommendations by providers and nurses. We respond to all medical and traumatic alerts and resuscitations and are able to administer medications when needed.

How is EM practice at a Community Teaching hospital different from an Academic Medical Center?
MercyOne Des Moines places a huge emphasis on teaching and education and takes tremendous pride in our residents’ training! As a community teaching hospital we aren’t directly affiliated with an academic institution so our providers and clinical specialists are employed by the hospital itself and do not have faculty appointments or didactic responsibilities. That translates to more time with our residents. In addition to pharmacy residents, MercyOne has medical residents in Internal Medicine, Family Medicine, General Surgery, and Psychiatry all of which rotate through the ED. Pharmacy residents have opportunities to participate in medical resident educational activities, but also benefit because they are given additional responsibilities and opportunities on the interdisciplinary team, especially in the ED!

What are the provider-pharmacist relationships like at MercyOne Des Moines Medical Center?
From the words of our Chief Medical Officer and EM provider Dr. Higinio Carreon:

MercyOne is a healthcare leader within Iowa, and our success is based on excellent physicians and clinical pharmacists. Our clinical pharmacists work daily within multidisciplinary teams to advise on the selection of medication, the optimal dose, and the best route of administration for individual patients. They provide information about potential side effects, assist with the acute management of a host of critical conditions, and ongoing evaluation of a treatment’s efficacy!

With key physician leaders, our pharmacists develop and manage hospital-wide medication management policies and guidelines. They have active voices nationally within Common Spirit Health, assisting in the evaluation and decision to introduce novel medications and the ongoing review of the use of all approved drugs and medicines used as part of any clinical trials. I cannot imagine being a first-class healthcare organization without our clinical pharmacist!
What is a typical day like for a resident in the Emergency Department?
Sam, current resident: The day to day can vary slightly depending on which EM experience you are on. All of them have you in the ED with the nurses and providers at bedside and we’re able to make recommendations up front, administer medications, assist with critical resuscitations, codes, traumas, and there is also time to discuss complex patient presentations and literature with the preceptor for the day. There are also staffing days interspersed in the rotations so you can develop proficiency as an independent practitioner. Regardless of which experience you are on, there is ample interaction with patients, nurses, other learners, and providers.

How are Emergency Medicine learning experiences differentiated throughout the year?
EM PGY2 residents will complete four individual EM learning experiences during the residency year in addition to Pediatric EM. Each EM learning experience is a progression of the last in terms of overall skill set and expectations, but also focuses on a unique area of practice as follows:

I. Orient the resident to the ED and ensure the global understanding of all policies, practices, and procedures that occur within the ED.
II. Expand the resident’s knowledge base and increase exposure to multiple different disease states and their subsequent treatment within the ED.
III. Develop the resident’s clinical teaching and precepting skills through facilitation of the PGY1 EM learning experience as a co-preceptor.
IV. Enhance the resident’s leadership skills as responsibilities for departmental management are transitioned to them.

How flexible are required and elective learning opportunities?
The residents’ schedule and the learning experiences themselves are incredibly flexible and that flexibility is a huge point of strength with our programs! We work with the residents to individualize their experiences to meet their specific goals and/or needs and make adjustments throughout the year. The sequence, length, focus, and electives are all customizable.

What is the staffing component and is there an on-call requirement?
After successfully completing EM I the resident will begin staffing in the ED every fourth weekend from 1230-2100 both Saturday and Sunday. They have the following Monday off in compensation. Additionally, the resident will staff one winter holiday and will staff the ED intermittently during subsequent EM learning experiences (not to exceed ~30% of their total hours).

What types of projects are EM PGY2 residents involved in?
During the residency year the EM PGY2 will complete a longitudinal research project, conduct an MUE or revise a treatment protocol/guideline/order set, and oversee a medication-use process improvement initiative. The resident will be presented a list of research and project ideas to choose from or may select an alternative project based on personal preference so long as a sufficient need exists. All responsibility for managing these projects resides with the resident.
What types of teaching and precepting opportunities exist?
The EM PGY2 resident will be provided a variety of teaching opportunities throughout the residency year. They will have didactic teaching responsibilities at Drake University, lecturing and facilitating case studies in the Cardiology elective. Additional didactic opportunities can be added as desired. The resident will provide at least one in-service for ED nurses, they provide informal medication related updates at ED Provider meetings, contribute articles to the pharmacy and ED newsletters, and complete Whiteboard education in addition to their regular journal club and case presentations. A grand rounds or CE lecture can also be added. The resident will co-precept the PGY1 residents in the ED along with APPE pharmacy students on rotation.

How do you ensure competency with all required disease states?
We utilize the appendix feature within PharmAcademic to track direct and non-direct patient experiences related to the 95 required topic areas for EM PGY2s. To help ensure these are all formally discussed and understood they are broken out and assigned to individual learning experiences, then adjusted as needed. Application and mastery is assessed through case discussions/debriefings, formal case presentations, intervention documentation and FARM notes.

What are the requirements for successful completion of the program?
All of the following must be satisfied to successfully complete the program:
- Satisfactory completion of all required learning experiences
- “Achieved” or demonstrated “satisfactory progress” for all required program goals and objectives, without any “needs improvement”
- Compliance with all staffing requirements
- Conduct and implement year-long research project after attaining IRB approval
  - Presentation of a poster at a conference determined by RPD
  - Formal presentation at Regional Pharmacy Residency Conference
  - Complete manuscript suitable for publication

What additional training opportunities exist for EM PGY2 residents?
All EM PGY2 residents will complete ACLS and PALS in addition to auditing ATLS.

What types of positions have past residents gone on to obtain?
All of our past graduates have secured positions as EM pharmacists prior to the end of the residency year!

What opportunities exist to attend national Emergency Medicine related conferences?
MercyOne covers all expenses for the EM PGY2 to attend one national conference during the course of the residency year as well as a Regional Pharmacy Residency Conference in the spring. The national conference must be related to pharmacy practice or emergency medicine and may include ASHP MCM, ACEP, ACCP, or another as approved by the RPD.
How much direct preceptor oversight is provided and how is feedback provided to residents?
Sam, current resident: A large focus of the culture at MercyOne is to provide frequent feedback for the purpose of growth and improvement. While on the EM rotations feedback is provided to and discussed with the resident with daily evaluation forms. Most of the preceptors on other learning experiences will try to make time to discuss the days’ events and performance of the resident and provide smaller goals to work on for the remainder of the experience. Direct oversight of the resident depends on the particular experience. The goal throughout the year is to become more independent as knowledge and confidence grows, but the preceptors and other pharmacists are very helpful and open to providing support to the resident when needed.

What are the interactions like with the Residency Program Director and at what frequency?
Sam, current resident: Jess has an open door policy and is always available as questions or issues arise. She has genuine concern for the wellbeing of the EM resident and makes time to have frequent check-ins, both formal and informal. The frequency can be adjusted to meet the resident’s needs. All of this is made very easy because you essentially share an office space with both the PGY1 and PGY2 RPDs.

What is the work-life balance like as an EM PGY2 resident at MercyOne Des Moines Medical Center?
Sam, current resident: A healthy work-life balance hasn’t been difficult to achieve so far. You’re provided with adequate technology and office space to facilitate effectively working on projects at the hospital during down-time or after the main experience of the day is completed. Time management is definitely a key skill to build on going into PGY2 year. My suggestion is to have a planner and use task lists for what needs to be accomplished for the day, and what extra projects are hanging out that can be worked on as time allows. I have not had issues with trying to minimize bringing project tasks home by maximizing my time and efficiency while in the office. A great aspect of the residency here at MercyOne is that everyone involved with the residency program truly cares about the wellness and resiliency of the resident and are available to reach out to for support throughout the year.