

Why I chose to participate in an externship?

I have a pretty diverse background having been a corporate lawyer prior to medical school. A career in drug development seemed like a good opportunity for me to utilize my varied skillset in a synergistic manner. I also like the idea of leveraging my medical and legal skills to positively impact the lives of potentially millions of people through the commercialization of new therapeutics. The externship was a great way for me to explore a career in drug development.

My experiences at Brickell and Aclaris

Both Brickell and Aclaris have been strong supporters of Advancing Innovation in Dermatology from the beginning. They were immediately receptive to the idea of sponsoring an externship program and both provided me with a travel and accommodation stipend to spend time in their respective offices.

At the time of my Brickell externship, it was a very small and privately held biotech based in Boulder, CO. There were probably less than 10 employees and I worked closely with both Patricia Walker, President and Chief Scientific Officer and Andrew Sklawer, Co-Founder and Chief Operating Officer. I have to say it was very cool to work so closely with company leadership and I was able to actively involve myself in all different aspects of the business right from the start. This included protocol drafting and review, writing a manuscript that was subsequently published in the JDD, and creating the framework for a target product profile related to the company's lead asset sofpironium bromide.

Aclaris was a larger, more established and publicly traded company at the time of my externship. Due to my residency schedule, I spent less time with Aclaris but worked closely with senior leadership there as well. Neal Walker, Stuart Shanler and Chris Powala invited me to sit in on teleconference calls and corporate presentations. They involved me in the discussions and also organized a round-robin of sorts where I was able to spend time with all different corporate executives learning about their respective roles in the company and drug development process.

Final thoughts

To a large extent an externship is a customized experience. There is no formal structure. While spending a dedicated portion of time of at least 2-4 weeks is highly recommended, many companies are willing to allow externs to work largely remotely. Most companies are also willing to provide a stipend for travel and accommodation.

It is important for potential externs to have a clear idea of the time commitment they are willing to make and also what they hope to achieve from completing the program. This requires thought and reflection. While the program can open a lot of doors it is up to each potential extern to decide how their externship should be structured. We also expect externs to stay involved with the AID and to help grow and facilitate the program for others. A lot of work has gone into making the program a success, and the support of alumni is critical for its future.

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