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The College of Graduate Studies Offers New Course in Pharmacoeconomics

Jennifer Lofland, PharmD*

* Thomas Jefferson University

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The College of Graduate Studies Offers New Course in Pharmacoeconomics

Pharmacoeconomics (PE) is defined as the description and analysis of the costs and consequences of pharmaceuticals and pharmaceutical services, and their effects on individuals, health care systems, and society. (1) Pharmacoeconomic research assesses the clinical outcomes of biotechnology and pharmaceutical therapies to evaluate the economic impact of using these products, to identify, measure, and compare the costs, risks, and benefits of programs or services, and to determine which therapeutic alternative produces the best outcome for the resources invested. (2) No longer the realm of pharmacy professionals only, pharmacoeconomic principles and methods can be used by health care practitioners and policymakers to assist in medication decision-making processes, including developing drug policy, allocating health care resources, and managing formularies. (3)

In response to the growing demand for education in the tenets of this rapidly evolving field, the College of Graduate Studies and the Department of Health Policy at Thomas Jefferson University have developed an innovative course entitled, "Pharmacoeconomics" (GC650). The goal of the three-credit, semester-long course, offered for the first time this past spring, is to provide learners with a thorough introduction to the field of pharmacoeconomics and disease management. Students completing the course will have gained the practical knowledge and skills necessary to understand the use of comprehensive pharmacoeconomics studies conducted within diverse settings. Students learn through lectures from invited guest experts, didactic sessions, and small group discussions. An overview of managed care principles (terminology, etc.) forms the foundation for the course and learners are then guided through an array of specific pharmacoeconomic topics, including cost-benefit, cost-utility, cost-minimization, and cost-effectiveness methods; statistics; decision analysis; and database management skills; and finance and accounting.

"GC650" is open to all Jefferson post baccalaureate students as well as non-matriculated students. "We are striving to fill an important gap for students, for whom a basic knowledge of pharmacoeconomic principles is becoming increasingly imperative in the current health care marketplace," says Nelda E. Johnson, PharmD, developer of the course and principal instructor. She added that the course should be of interest as well to the pharmaceutical and health care industry in general, due to its concise content, accessibility (the course is offered in the late afternoon, with working professionals' schedules in mind) and "because we've been told by so many of our colleagues that, aside from going back to school, there are few offerings like this," says Johnson. The majority of students in the inaugural class were enrolled in the University's Masters of Biochemistry program and one student was from a local pharmaceutical company. Course participants who are not matriculated students may receive pharmacy CME credit.

David B. Nash, MD, MBA, Associate Dean and Director of the Department of Health Policy, is the course coordinator. Assisting Dr. Johnson in organizing the course were last year's Department of Health Policy PE fellows from Janssen Pharmaceuticals, Sandoz (now Novartis), and SmithKline Beecham. Helping to coordinate the course is the Scientific Training and Education Unit, a division of the Department of Health Policy.

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To obtain more information about the pharmacoeconomics course, please call Ms. Barbara Bozarth, Program Director, Education, the Department of Health Policy, at 955-2822, or Dr. Georgeann Buescher, Associate Dean, the College of Graduate Studies at 503-5799.

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About the Author

Jennifer Lofland, PharmD, is Assistant Project Director in the Department of Health Policy, Jefferson Medical College, Thomas Jefferson University.