

Why I chose to participate in an externship

I was an Advancing Innovation in Dermatology Scholar at the time of my externship with Novan, Inc. As an AID Scholar, I had a chance to participate in virtual conference calls and presentations about various aspects of the innovation pipeline and was excited to learn more about the drug development process. Prior to residency, I had spent one year as a Clinical Research Fellow during which I helped organize an investigator-initiated trial; I was curious to compare this clinical research experience with the research and trials that take place in the pharmaceutical industry. Finally, I was planning on moving to North Carolina (where Novan, Inc is located) to work after residency and was excited to learn about the pharmaceutical industry landscape in this region.

My externship experience

I was fortunate to be paired with an excellent local mentor, Dr. Tomoko Maeda-Chubachi, who is a dermatologist and is the Vice President of Medical Dermatology for Novan, Inc. Novan is a biotechnology company that is focused on developing innovations utilizing nitric oxide-based therapeutic interventions. These include indications in dermatology, gastroenterology and women's health.

I spent 3 weeks at Novan, Inc during which time I helped with protocol development, editing of scientific articles, development of investigator training modules, and meetings with clinical research organizations. The Novan team was wonderful in welcoming me to the externship and orienting me to help me get the most out of my experience there. I truly enjoyed the fact that every day was unique and intellectually stimulating in various ways. While it was very different than my day to day life as a dermatology resident, I enjoyed it very much! We have been able to keep in touch since the completion of my externship and had a chance to meet up at the American Academy of Dermatology meeting and once I moved to North Carolina.

Final thoughts

I highly recommend this type of experience for any dermatology resident, no matter what their career goals may be. I picked up skills through this experience (i.e. how to optimize my presentation skills, how to run meetings efficiently), that I found myself using in my residency and beyond. I think that 2-4 weeks is the ideal time period to do this type of an experience. By being present at their offices, I was able to attend company meetings and participate more thoroughly in various tasks that arose.

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