

Pharmaceuticals Interest Group Workshop at the 72nd ASMS (Anaheim, CA)

Title of the workshop: Exploring Non-Industry Paths in Pharma: Roles, Functions, and Opportunities at FDA and USP

Date of the Workshop: Monday, June 3rd, 2024

Organizers/Presiders list: Paolo Lecchi and Brett Howard (United States Pharmacopeia) and Mack Shih (Food and Drug Administration).

The workshop focused on investigating career avenues and opportunities within the pharmaceutical field that lie outside the traditional scope of the pharmaceutical industry. This includes careers in regulatory agencies, non-profit organizations, and other sectors related to pharmaceutical sciences that are not directly involved in pharmaceutical manufacturing or commercialization.

We particularly highlighted two organizations: the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the United States Pharmacopeia (USP). These organizations play a pivotal role in protecting public health and advancing pharmaceutical science, yet their responsibilities and tasks are often not clearly understood. The objectives of the workshop were:

- Inform attendees about the work conducted by the FDA and USP, highlighting both the differences between these organizations and the ways in which they collaborate.
- Spark interest in scientific careers, training opportunities, and other activities available at both the FDA and USP, with particular emphasis on those related to analytical sciences.

We had an estimated audience of approximately 100 people in a room with a capacity of over 500. As anticipated, the audience appeared to primarily consist of graduate students, post-docs, and young professionals.

The workshop initially faced several audio-visual issues, including non-working microphones and malfunctioning projectors, with an evident lack of technical support. Despite these challenges, we proceeded with the workshop, and the problems were eventually fixed.

Following a brief introduction outlining the objectives of the workshop, three presentations were featured:

- "What is the United States Pharmacopeia?" by Brett Howard (USP)
- "Mass Spectrometry Applications at USP" by Paolo Lecchi (USP)
- "Getting to Know the Food and Drug Administration" by Mack Shih (FDA)

A common theme in these presentations was the emphasize on global outreach of these organizations and their impact on health worldwide.

Ample room was given for discussion, and participants asked several questions about the need for modernization of analytical procedures, especially at USP. However, most of the follow-up questions, which primarily concerned employment and job-seeking tips, were asked individually and directly to the organizers after the workshop had concluded. These questions were anticipated, as exploring alternative employment opportunities in the pharmaceutical field was one of the key objectives of the workshop.