

STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

Nevada Society of Health-System Pharmacists

ADAPTING TO VIRTUAL LEARNING DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about unprecedented changes to the lives of many people globally. Numerous working professionals have lost their jobs and many businesses have shut down operations due to the economic impact of COVID-19. In contrast, others deemed “essential” workers place their lives on the front lines. This pandemic has also resulted in schools closing across the world and transitioning to a remote format. Globally, millions of students are out of the physical classrooms and are forced to move onto virtual platforms.

As a final year pharmacy student during these challenging times, the didactic and clinical curriculum of our pharmacy school has been impacted. Transitioning to online learning does have its unique advantages. The biggest one being the flexibility for students to study whenever and wherever they want to and can adjust their study schedules around their responsibilities and commitments. However, this transition has been the hardest for those who are traditional learners and prefer the classroom setting like myself due to some of the unique challenges that we have to overcome such as maintaining focus, motivation and self-discipline in order to successfully navigate the transition to online learning.



During the first few weeks, the biggest challenge for me was keeping my focus and motivation. External factors such as social media, electronics, household chores, pets and family were just some of the many distractions that easily derailed my focus during lectures, which made online learning initially difficult. Staying at the comfort of my room and home provided an indifferent and nonchalant type of study environment. In my experience, staying in an academic setting is one of the factors that makes me study and work harder. Studying with fellow students in the library or simply receiving on-the-spot clarifications from classmates is obviously not feasible during this time. However, forming virtual interactions through online platforms made it possible to maintain that sense of collaboration and motivation. Over the course of virtual learning, I learned how to reduce the possibility of distractions by simply wearing noise cancelling headphones, setting schedules for chores, and treating virtual classes like in-person classes. I also established a dedicated learning environment that is quiet and organized for me to work and study efficiently. *(Content continued on the next page)*

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Adapting To Virtual Learning During The Covid-19 Pandemic (Continued from previous page)

Another challenge during this transition was maintaining self-discipline. Before the pandemic started, I had a set study habit or routine that worked well for me throughout pharmacy school. After each class, I would go straight to the library and review the materials from our lecture that day. When we transitioned online, the school temporarily closed as well as the library and other places I used to study. I needed to develop a new approach on how to effectively study at home. I found that audio and video-based lecture and aids worked well for me, so I made sure to build time into my schedule to watch, replay and fully understand our lectures. Being proactive and self-aware, helped me get the most success from virtual learning even when life outside of school became challenging.

After our first 2 years of didactics, our final year of clinical rotations is something that we have been looking forward to. However, it was unfortunate that many sites cancelled their availability to decrease risk of exposure to the virus. Some rotations remained the same, but the environment was quite different due to the need to transition virtually. During my ambulatory care rotation, the clinic was closed, and they only conducted telehealth appointments with patients. It was a unique way to interact with patients, but it was unfortunate not to get the usual in-person interactions with patients such as doing interviews and counseling. Nonetheless, the faculty and employees of Roseman University are going above and beyond, by adapting to these difficult times and making sure that students are getting quality experiential teaching and remain on track for graduation.

The magnitude and duration of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are uncertain. It is imperative that pharmacy schools, students, faculty, and preceptors adapt and implement novel educational methods and strategies to achieve our goals and objectives. I am positive that we will get through this together because from great trials come great rewards. The most important lesson I have learned throughout this transition is adaptability. I learned to accept reality and be flexible in the face of new situations. This moment required me to learn new skills, develop new habits and build mental toughness that are critical for preparing pharmacy students entering the profession or advancing their career through post graduate training to continue to provide optimal patient care.

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