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## UH Hilo College of Pharmacy Creates Program to Aid Military Mental Health Professionals



The University of Hawai'i at Hilo is the first in the nation to offer a Master of Science in Clinical Psychopharmacology (MSCP) degree solely within a College of Pharmacy after an August 25, 2011 vote by the University of Hawai'i Board of Regents.

Typically offered by schools of psychology, the degree gives clinical psychologists in the military, as well as in Guam and two states (New Mexico and Louisiana), the authority to write prescriptions once they pass a national board exam. Initially the program will be offered to students at the Tripler Army Medical Center on O'ahu.

"Senator Inouye has studied the need for psychologists to have prescriptive authority for decades," said Pat DeLeon, chief of staff to Daniel K. Inouye (D-Hawai'i) and past-president of the American

Psychological Association (APA). "We're happy to see our College of Pharmacy take the lead in developing this program that helps our troops and their families while looking ahead to improving the way all clinical psychologists can do their jobs."

The MSCP program will provide advanced professional development to working clinicians, with an initial focus on those practicing in the state of Hawai'i.

treatment for our service men and women and their families, and we're honored to meet the needs of the military in Hawai'i," said John M. Pezzuto, dean of the College of Pharmacy. "In addition, our long-term expectations are that we will be able to help improve patient care on a broader basis if legislation pending in several states, including Hawai'i, gives prescriptive authority to all MSCP graduates. In any case, clinical psychologists will be better positioned to interact with physicians and care for their patients."

The program will begin this fall semester. Each successive group of students would start in the fall, and will require four semesters and one summer session to complete.

Most of the coursework will be offered via distance education through lectures posted on the Internet and biweekly hour-long meetings between instructors and students that will be recorded and provided to students for review.

"The curriculum begins with a strong foundation in biochemistry and physiology," said Edward Fisher, associate dean of the College of Pharmacy and director of the MSCP program. "Our objective is to provide a rigorous, advanced education in clinical psychopharmacology so licensed, doctoral-level, practicing psychologists can safely and effectively prescribe medications for their patients."

The first group of students is expected to be between five and 10 and will be located at Tripler Army Medical Center, where Pharmacy instructors will make live on-site visits between three and five times per course.

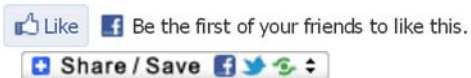
"With more than 40,000 active military personnel stationed in Hawai'i, we are constantly striving to meet and improve on the pharmacologic treatment of mental health issues," said Captain Rafael A. Salas, chief of the Education and Training Branch and deputy chief in the Department of Psychology at Tripler Army Medical Center. "Our clinical psychologist staff has expressed a great deal of enthusiasm about learning about psychopharmacology from the experts at the College of Pharmacy. We are looking forward to making this program a success."

The program includes a one-year practicum where students must complete a minimum of 400 hours under the supervision of an individual with prescriptive authority, Salas added.

The MSCP program was given interim approval by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) in June. WASC is the regional accrediting organization responsible for evaluating colleges and universities in the western part of the United States. In recommending the program for final approval, the reviewers said that "UH Hilo is commended for the strong planning demonstrated in this new program with a well-articulated design of courses, a solid financial plan, and an admirable plan of faculty development."

In addition to the Doctor of Pharmacy, the MSCP is the third new degree to be offered by the College of Pharmacy this year. In February, the Board approved a Ph.D. in Pharmaceutical Science as well as a Bachelor of Arts degree in Pharmacy Studies.

Tripler Army Medical Center, located in Honolulu, is the headquarters of the Pacific Regional Medical Command of the armed forces administered by the United States Army in the State of Hawai'i. It is the largest military hospital in the Asian and Pacific Rim, providing a full range of services, including mental health services.



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**Author:** [Guest Contributor](#)

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