Laura Aykroyd (PharmD 2006) considers herself lucky to have had the opportunity to shadow an ICU clinical pharmacist after her freshman year in college. “After seeing his involvement and impact he was able to make for the patients, I decided to pursue pharmacy and more specifically become a critical care pharmacy specialist,” she recalls. Originally from Iowa, Laura transferred to Purdue University after completing her pre-pharmacy requirements at Augustana University in South Dakota. “I visited a number of top pharmacy schools across the U.S., knowing that I had an interest in clinical pharmacy. During my Purdue campus visit, a number of individuals spoke highly of the opportunities to pursue clinical pharmacy.” She earned her PharmD from Purdue, went on to complete two years in residency at Boston Medical Center, and is board certified as a Pharmacotherapy Specialist.

Laura is a clinical pharmacy specialist for Neurocritical Care at Indiana University Health Methodist Hospital in Indianapolis. In addition to providing direct patient care alongside a multi-professional team, her position also includes a focus on education and the opportunity to precept pharmacy residents and students, provide nursing education, and collaborate with providers on research. She enjoys working in the ever-changing, fast-paced environment. “The patient conditions are extremely challenging, and it is very rewarding to be part of an extraordinary team in a progressive, top-notch institution,” she comments.

Transferring to Purdue was clearly the right choice for Laura from a professional standpoint, but it also introduced her to the world of endurance sports. “I’ve always loved running,” she says. “My college roommate (another Purdue Pharmacy alumna) and I decided to run in the Chicago Marathon for fun, and it was wonderful! Soon after, I ran the Boston Marathon and was likely the only runner sitting in the athlete village studying for a Med Chem exam prior to the race.”

It wasn’t until after graduating from Purdue that Laura participated in her first triathlon. “I signed up for an Ironman 70.3 event because it was held in my current town. I had no business doing that race given I
hadn’t swam in 10 years and only bought a road bike a few months prior.” Despite this, she had a blast. “I simply love to train and am learning to love to race. It is my passion, and the joy I get from it is indescribable—running and biking are my stress outlets. There is also nothing like the feeling of racing, laying it all out on the line to see how far you can push yourself. The amazing people I get to train with make it even more enjoyable, and they inspire and push me to improve.”

To date, Laura has completed four Ironman and seven 70.3 (half) Ironman events, most recently having completed the Ironman World Championships held in Hawaii in October. “I never dreamed I would be able to qualify to compete, and it was an amazing privilege to be at the start line.”

The active mother of two admits that balancing work, family, and training is challenging, but she has a great deal of support. “My kids (ages 5 and 2) luckily think it’s normal for their mom to continually be running or biking. I try to do most of my training in the early morning hours or during nap time. My hope is that my kids are inspired by their mom leading a healthy lifestyle and not being afraid to chase her dreams.”

“My current goal is to enjoy chilling with my family and cheering on the athletes I’m coaching to hopefully achieve their goals,” says Laura. In the coming year, however, she will run in the Boston Marathon and race at the 70.3 World Championships. We didn’t expect someone who is literally always on the go to sit still too long.
Laura Aykroyd competes in the Ironman World Championships in Hawaii (© FinisherPix.com)