

“MORTAR & PENCIL” CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY WISCONSIN SCHOOL OF PHARMACY STUDENT WRITING CLUB:

# Business Member Spotlight: Dr. Nicholas Olson, AIDS Resource Center of Wisconsin

by Hannah Schultz, 2019 PharmD Candidate, Gabrielle Ulik, 2019 PharmD Candidate, Sara O'Dowd, 2019 PharmD Candidate, and Kayla Tryggestad, 2019 PharmD Candidate

## Day to Day Practice

Dr. Nicholas Olson, PharmD, BCACP, AAHIVP is the Director of Clinical Pharmacy Services at AIDS Resource Center of Wisconsin (ARCW), a multidisciplinary institution supporting patients living with AIDS/HIV and helping individuals appropriately manage their disease. The ARCW is unique because it is organized to be an HIV Medical Home, which enlists the expertise of several healthcare disciplines: medical, dental, mental health, pharmacy, legal, social work, preventative care, and a food pantry service. Providing these services within one building minimizes barriers of access to care and improves ARCW patients' quality of care. ARCW is currently the only recognized patient-centered medical home in Wisconsin exclusively serving patients living with HIV. ARCW has four medical clinics throughout Wisconsin, located in Green Bay, Kenosha, Madison, and Milwaukee, as well as a number of outpatient pharmacies serving the Milwaukee and Madison areas. ARCW recently merged with Rocky Mountain Cares – an organization dedicated to the comprehensive care of patients with HIV – and as a result opened a medical clinic and outpatient pharmacy in Denver, Colorado.

As the Director of Clinical Pharmacy Services, Dr. Olson is responsible for managing and supporting patient medication management activities at all ARCW clinic locations and coordinating patient care at the outpatient pharmacy locations. Dr. Olson's typical day consists of developing proposals for patient programs, mentoring pharmacy and medical students, and meeting with patients to manage their complex medication regimens. In addition to his ARCW roles, Dr. Olson is passionate about teaching pharmacy students

– specifically about AIDS/HIV. He frequently lectures at Concordia University Wisconsin School of Pharmacy (CUW-SOP) and the University of Wisconsin - Madison School of Pharmacy (UW-SOP), providing students with an introductory background in AIDS/HIV medications and up-to-date disease management. Fostering professional development in this field, Dr. Olson invites numerous CUW-SOP and UW-SOP fourth-year pharmacy students to the ARCW for clinical rotations. Additionally, Dr. Olson integrates a post graduate year-one (PGY-1) resident into the ARCW healthcare team.

As a pharmacy student mentor and a voice for the pharmacy profession, Dr. Olson places great importance on staying current with legislative issues impacting pharmacy. As a result of this commitment, he has served on the Pharmacy Society of Wisconsin (PSW) Board of Directors for the past four years and in September assumed the role of PSW President. Dr. Olson believes it is important for all pharmacy providers to have a voice in how the profession advances and is shaped throughout history; therefore, he will continue to be an innovative advocate for PSW and the pharmacy profession and encourages his colleagues to do the same.

## Raising the Bar

ARCW is a specialized pharmacy practice; all pharmacists are highly trained and required to complete the American Academy of HIV Pharmacy (AAHIVP) certification, a testament to their specialized expertise and passion for AIDS/HIV medication and disease management and primary care management.

A distinctive characteristic of ARCW is the blending of clinical and outpatient pharmacy, streamlining the process for

providers so they may give their patients the same level of healthcare across the board. One of the latest advancements Dr. Olson and his current PGY-1 resident worked hard to implement is the creation of a medication management protocol. This new protocol takes the individual collaborative practice agreements and condenses them into one scope of practice, giving pharmacists the capability to completely manage patients and their multiple disease states. For example, patients with diabetes and hypertension can come to ARCW's ambulatory care clinic pharmacy, get their blood pressure and blood glucose levels checked, and have the pharmacist make any necessary medication adjustments during the same clinic visit. This practice allows pharmacists to manage the patient as a whole, which ultimately lowers their overall cost of care.

In the outpatient pharmacy, ARCW simplifies patient access to medication and makes them more affordable. ARCW offers pickup, free home delivery, and shipping all over the United States. Additionally, ARCW offers extensive financial assistance, ensuring patients are not denied care due to cost. The ARCW pharmacy is unique in that when patients purchase prescriptions through the pharmacy, the funds collected support the ARCW facility and services. This allows ARCW to continue providing the highest quality HIV/AIDS health care and therefore reducing patients' symptoms and disease progression.

## Bumps in the Road

While the ARCW organization is doing incredible things for their patients, it is a small organization compared to area health systems, and therefore subject to certain challenges. The ARCW pharmacy group currently is avoiding reverting back



*Above: staff at the AIDS Resource Center of Wisconsin.*

to traditional pharmacy roles that focus solely on dispensing medications, especially in times when the clinic and pharmacy become busy. It is important for Dr. Olson and the staff to stay true to being an integrated part of a patient's healthcare team and take ownership of their role within ARCW. Advocating for patients takes a lot of work, effort, belief, and inspiration.

Another challenge Dr. Olson faces is the "behind the scenes" healthcare issues, such as the changing insurance landscape, federal funding, and other shifts that may disproportionately affect ARCW due to the organization's size. However, Dr. Olson navigates these bumps in the road, continuing to serve the ARCW patients – thanks largely to their inspiration and his team's support.

### **Moving Forward**

Dr. Olson and his colleagues are not resting on the impressive achievements they have accomplished thus far – they continue to develop and advance their practice to better serve their patients. A major focus

for the future involves continuing to create a true medical home environment where all health professionals can operate together. Each day, Dr. Olson challenges the pharmacy staff to work closely with each other and the other medical staff; his goal is "to have all ARCW professionals working cohesively to eliminate the line between outpatient and ambulatory clinic healthcare to provide the most effective care to patients." Another key to Dr. Olson's vision for the future is further integration of students and residents into this unique practice site. With its diverse patient population and innovative practice model, ARCW serves as a valuable environment to facilitate professional learning and interprofessional collaboration. Dr. Olson and the team of healthcare professionals have worked tirelessly to establish ARCW as an important staple in the community. This facility continues to support patients throughout the Milwaukee area and has become a well-known resource for many local healthcare systems. With their passion to help, learn, and teach others, Dr. Olson and ARCW will only continue to thrive

and grow in order to accommodate and support even more patients in the future.

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