

The Evolution of a Pharmacist A Personal Journey

by Brian Jensen, RPh

Several years ago, I penned a piece that appeared in *JPSW* entitled, “The Evolution of a Caring Profession.” Timed with the launch of the Wisconsin Pharmacy Quality Collaborative (WPQC), it traced the arc of pharmacy over a pivotal forty year period of transformation...from product to patient-facing. My personal journey, over these same forty years, is highlighted by a number of points. With age, comes perspective. This perspective has given me the ability to now connect these points, understand the big picture sharing tenets contributing to success of the journey.

It begins and ends with mentorship. Indeed, I was fortunate to have had visionary mentors that provided early exposure to a philosophy of patient-centered collaborative care. They helped me to see the pharmacy profession through a different lens. When coupled with the strategic thinking that was taught and the passion that was modeled, the seeds were planted and the path set. The result was a personal mission to make a positive difference in patient’s lives and drive the pharmacy profession forward. Choose your mentors well...discern what works to make them successful and then integrate these attributes into your character.

Build, define and refine your personal mission statement. Use this statement to guide you at critical inflection points. Looking back, my pharmacy career can be described as a journey with three phases. It was guided by a personal mission statement and used to “test” opportunities. The first phase, spent developing my practice philosophy, took place in a hospital pharmacy setting. I worked in teams providing “clinical” pharmacy services using a decentralized pharmacy platform. From providing direct care to supporting a drug information center to an eventual administrative role, I gained keen appreciation that the delivery of care requires a collaborative approach. While the work was rewarding, I continued to

explore options that would allow greater opportunities to serve patients directly. At this time, pharmacist’s roles began to expand through broader application of the principles of pharmaceutical care. I seized on this evolutionary change and the opportunity to bring my insight into a new type of community practice.

The founding of Lakeshore Apothecare Inc kicked off the second phase of my journey. I pioneered a sustainable, team-based practice model, in which pharmacists collaborated with providers and payers to meet patient needs. As payers and providers realized they needed to shift focus away from component cost reduction strategies and onto outcomes, the Asheville Project launched. Moving from the Asheville “test tube” to the “mini-plant” stage, Lakeshore Apothecare was one of the five original practice groups. Building on the success, I became part of the team that taught and replicated the Asheville model around the United States. I learned that if you can identify shared goals and align incentives to achieve these goals, positive outcomes result. We baked this idea into the Asheville model. It’s still considered a prototype for collaborative care programs.

It was during this career phase that the opportunity to lead change was realized. This reflected the “modeling” that was imprinted on me early in my career. In addition to ushering the Asheville Project into Wisconsin, I worked to develop the APhA Principles of Practice for Pharmaceutical Care and partnered with our state’s pharmacy leadership in developing the Wisconsin Center for Pharmaceutical Care to train community pharmacists as leaders and change agents. Accelerating the change process, PSW and the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Pharmacy developed and promoted community pharmacy practice residencies with Lakeshore Apothecare as the first Wisconsin residency site. This commitment to patient care was further expressed as a founding member and contributor to WPQC. Finally,



the opportunity to share this passion for pharmacy’s potential, as PSW’s first elected president, with other like-minded pharmacists was energizing.

Now in the third phase of my career, the board phase, I turned the practice keys over to colleagues, Marv and Joylyn Moore. I continue to work in the pharmacy one day a week, while serving on the board of directors of the Community Pharmacy Foundation (CPF), the Pharmacy Quality Alliance (PQA) Executive Research Advisory Council, and a number of civic groups. I have also provided pharmacy services and leadership to a medical mission clinic in Guatemala for the past 10 years. This blend of practice and service has allowed me to keep my pharmacy skills current still seeing the patients I love to take care of at the pharmacy, while having time to shape future practice. I am quite proud that the pharmacy continues to thrive and is actively advancing practice care initiatives.

I am a pharmacist, heart and soul. The pharmacy profession provides rich opportunities to apply your knowledge and passion...many of these roles are only beginning to be formed. With strong mentors and through the formation of a personal mission, my course was true to this vision. Now, comes the opportunity to “pay it forward”. Through the support of projects, such as Flip the Pharmacy, I am investing in pharmacy’s future.

With every mission trip to Guatemala, I carry the following words from Archbishop Oscar Romero...excerpted as follows:

“We plant seeds that one day will grow. We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise. We lay foundations that will need further development. We are prophets of a future not our own.”

Indeed, my hope is that this body of work will bear fruit and that our shared vision will be realized.

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