

Leadership Spotlight: Thomas Dilworth

by Noah Kaitz, 2023 PharmD Candidate



Being honest, humble, transparent, and decisional are core values that Thomas Dilworth, PharmD, BCPSAQ-ID strives to exemplify as a leader. As the system director of clinical pharmacy services at Advocate Aurora Health, Dilworth provides direct oversight of the infectious diseases and drug policy teams while also overseeing pharmacy practice advancement. Although he originally had aspired to become a community pharmacist, Dilworth found a passion for serving patients in an inpatient setting while completing his fourth-year pharmacy school rotations, particularly one at University Hospital at UW-Madison. Following these clinical experiences, Dilworth pursued a PGY1 residency at the University of New Mexico, where he was inspired to extend his residency training by completing a PGY2 residency in infectious diseases. To complement the clinical experience he had gained, Dilworth again stayed on at the University of New Mexico College of Pharmacy to complete a research fellowship in infectious diseases pharmacotherapy. Dilworth decided to move back to Milwaukee after his fellowship to be close to his and his wife's families. At that time, opportunities for pharmacists specializing in infectious disease were scarce in Milwaukee. Facing this challenge, Dilworth took a role as a pharmacy supervisor at St. Francis Hospital, which he states was "one of the greatest things [he] ever did." The job was totally outside his comfort zone. In the role, Dilworth took on many administrative responsibilities, which laid the foundation for many of the leadership skills Dilworth uses in his current role. He stayed in this role at St. Francis for about two years, during which he expanded clinical pharmacy practice, started an antimicrobial stewardship program, and began a PGY-1 pharmacy practice residency program. Then he returned to his interest in infectious disease and took a job as an infectious diseases

pharmacy specialist at Aurora St. Luke's Medical Center. There he started a PGY2 infectious diseases residency. After five years in this role, he applied for his current role. When asked about his greatest professional achievement, Dilworth cites his experience establishing the PGY1 residency at St. Francis and the infectious disease residency program at St. Luke's, which has trained five infectious disease pharmacists to date. Although rewarding, this experience came with many challenges. One of the biggest challenges Dilworth faced while developing the PGY2 infectious diseases program was working with the many pharmacy and non-pharmacy stakeholders to secure the right learning experiences for the ID residents. It was a priority for Dilworth that the residency learning experiences maximized the resident's exposure to all areas of ID pharmacy practice and antimicrobial stewardship during the one-year time frame.

Concerns Today

Reflecting upon the present and future state of pharmacy practice, Dilworth feels the pharmacy profession is taking many steps in the right direction, but he has two major concerns. The first concern is that the pharmacy profession lacks a unified voice. While there are many professional pharmacy organizations that act as key leaders in advancing pharmacy practice, Dilworth believes a singular voice for all pharmacy professionals in the U.S. would allow pharmacy advancement efforts to reach their full potential. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, a major barrier to expanding pharmacists' ability to prescribe Paxlovid® was incorporating the opinions and advice from a large number of pharmacy organizations into one coherent message. A unified organization would not only help streamline future practice advancements, but would create a synergistic voice for change. Dilworth's insight into this challenge aligns significantly with PSW's "One Voice, One Vision," which drove the 1998 unification

of all pharmacists, pharmacy technicians, and pharmacy students in Wisconsin into a single advocacy group.

The second big challenge that Dilworth believes the pharmacy profession faces is an awareness that, as the healthcare delivery system evolves, the pharmacist role must evolve with it. There are big changes to come and new challenges to be faced, so it is crucial that pharmacists are not only aware of these changes but are ready to adapt and advocate for their role to best meet the needs of future patients. Change is one constant in life, Dilworth says, which is why he believes it is a priority that we are thinking 10, 15, and 20 years in advance to anticipate and plan for these changes.

One change that Dilworth expects to see in the pharmacy practice over the next 10 years is an increase in home-based care services offered. With inpatient care being expensive, burdensome to the healthcare system, and inconvenient for many patients, Dilworth believes a shift to homecare is on the horizon. We have already seen the rapid expansion of telehealth services within recent years, which would likely play a role in home-based care. Pharmacists will likely have a significant role in home-based care, whether it is through telehealth or something completely new; therefore, it is important to consider how we want to expand the role of the pharmacist in a way that fills this growing need.

Advice for Future Leaders

Dilworth's advice for future pharmacy leaders is as follows: Be humble; seek the counsel of people around you. Be vulnerable; recognize that it is okay to not know everything, but you do need to know where to look and who to ask. Read books; they provide you with unique perspectives on life that you can bring into your own leadership role. Lastly, acknowledge that life is an infinite game (a term coined by Simon

Sinek in his book, *The Infinite Game*). In business and in life, you can never win, but you can be ahead or behind, so get ahead and then go home and enjoy yourself. There will always be more work to do when you return. When asked what he would do differently knowing what he knows now, one thing Dilworth says he would focus on is being authentic while at work, because by doing this, you will find yourself in a role that is the perfect fit for you.

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