

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON SCHOOL OF PHARMACY STUDENT WRITING CLUB:

PSW Leadership Spotlight: Jeff Fish

by Hope Schier, 2024 PharmD Candidate

For Jeff Fish, PharmD, FCCM, BCCCP, it's the simpler things in life that define success, things like being a team player and making positive impacts on patient care while being a loving husband and father. Fish admits he has never viewed himself as the stereotypical "big L" leader, and he has never sought administrative titles. However, it is undeniable that within the pharmacy profession, Jeff Fish is a significant clinical leader and mentor for the next generation of pharmacists.

Fish is a critical care pharmacist at University of Wisconsin (UW) Health Hospitals and Clinics combined medical/surgical intensive care unit (ICU), also known as the Trauma Life Center (TLC). His first exposure to UW Health's TLC was during his undergraduate studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Pharmacy, and he has been providing exceptional patient care in the TLC for the last 28 years. Fish received a Bachelor of Pharmacy degree in 1991 at the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Pharmacy before moving to Minnesota and completing his Doctor of Pharmacy degree in 1993 at University of Minnesota College of Pharmacy. Fish then completed a cardiology fellowship at University of Minnesota-Regions Medical Center before receiving a job offer at UW Health in the TLC. Fish earned his board certification in pharmacotherapy in 1997 and board certification in critical care in 2015. In 2017, he was recognized as a fellow in the Society of Critical Care Medicine. When asked if he would change anything from the early part of his career, Fish said, "Nothing."

Mentor

Fish first believed he was going to be a community pharmacist after meeting his first pharmacist mentor, James Lombard, at Lombard's Clinic-Pharmacy with Medical Associates where his mother worked as a technician in Baraboo, Wis. However, once in pharmacy school, Fish knew acute care

was his calling. He loved the atmosphere of acute care pharmacy, and it was his first exposure at UW Health in the TLC that made him want to become an ICU pharmacist. Fish credits George Classic, Rich Christopherson, and Cindy Gaston with providing exceptional guidance and mentorship when he started his UW Health career.

Fish says that mentoring students is a significant highlight of his job; he has been a preceptor for multiple IPPE and APPE students during his 28 years of practice. Fish shares that spending time with learners helps him to better understand medicine and literature. In 1999, Fish launched the PGY2- Critical Care Residency Program at UW Health and continues to be the residency program director. This PGY2 program has trained over 20 residents. He is proud to co-coordinate a critical care elective course at the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Pharmacy with Melissa Ha, PharmD, BCCCP. In 2017, Fish was recognized as a master preceptor by the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy for his dedication and commitment to training and mentoring future pharmacists.

Team Leader

What Fish enjoys most in his day-to-day is the team atmosphere during rounds. The UW Health TLC interdisciplinary team consists of attending physicians, fellows, residents, nurses, and often various learners, and they round on each patient on the service for that day. Fish endorses an atmosphere that promotes collaboration and welcomes questions. He appreciates that his desk is physically located in the middle of the TLC unit, where he is truly integrated into the team. With 28-plus years of experience, Fish draws confidence from the trusting relationships he has developed with other ICU health professionals and values their partnership in patient care.

In being an active pharmacist ICU team member, Fish is the co-chair of the Trauma



and Life Support Center QA committee. He is also a member of the UW Health system-wide Critical Care Committee. Fish finds it rewarding to participate in work that directly impacts UW Health protocols and guidelines, improving overall patient care. He is particularly proud of his work analyzing sedation and ventilation practices within the medical/surgical ICU at UW Health. Fish and his team submitted a research abstract, which was recognized by the Society of Critical Care Medicine as a Gold Medal Recipient in 2019, demonstrating novel patient treatment practices. This work impacted practice at UW Health and is recognized nationally. Optimizing sedation standards, reducing health system expenses, and improving patient outcomes has brought Fish great pride.

Concerns Today

Just like technology, healthcare is ever evolving. Fish shares his uncertainty regarding the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) and its role in the provision of care. He wonders if AI will take away some roles historically managed by the pharmacist, like monitoring vitals, as exploration of AI providing real-time data is explored. Alternatively, he ponders if AI may complement pharmacists and enhance their efficiency if utilized as a tool in data analysis, drug interaction checking, inventory management, and more.

Regarding the recent boom of new

monoclonal antibodies and increasing specialty medications, Fish shares his concerns related to the costs of these medications. He notes that health-system pharmacy cost is shifting to outpatient and ambulatory care specialty medications. He wonders how this may impact health-system pharmacy budgets considering the cost burden shifting away from inpatient pharmacy. In the next 10 years, Fish believes we will continue to treat more patients from the comfort of their homes and in ambulatory care settings. Less general care will be provided in hospitals, as home infusion and the utilization of visiting nurse services continues to grow.

Advice for Future Leaders

To future clinical leaders, Fish says, "Try to get involved as much as possible." He emphasizes that you don't have to hold

a leadership title to make a difference. He encourages our future leaders to be involved in committees that change practice, as he reflects on his team's impact on sedation protocols. Fish says to be open and encourage questions that spark collaboration. In creating a welcoming environment, staying involved, and giving back to learners, Fish says you too can be viewed as a leader whom people trust and feel comfortable confiding in and seeking feedback from. He says the best advice he has received during his career is, "Don't be afraid to say, 'I don't know.'" Fish believes honesty, and a promise to find the requested information and get back to the requestor, is much more valuable and respectable than guessing an answer which may or may not be wrong. Additionally, this has taught him how to retrieve information quickly and made him an asset to efficiently answering

questions in UW Health's TLC.

Although Fish says he was surprised to receive the 2023 Pharmacy Society of Wisconsin Pharmacist of the Year Award, his humble leadership and commitment to patient care truly set him apart, making the recognition well-deserved. He reflects on this award and the nomination from his peers as one of his greatest personal achievements. Fish will continue to lead at the UW Health TLC and serve as a leader and mentor within the pharmacy profession. A final piece of wisdom from Fish is to find happiness doing what you love as success is hard to define.

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