

MEDICAL COLLEGE OF WISCONSIN SCHOOL OF PHARMACY STUDENT WRITING CLUB:

Business Member Spotlight: Omar Eliwa, RPh - Welltopia Pharmacy

by Sochenda Pen, 2024 PharmD Candidate

Welltopia Pharmacy is an independent community pharmacy focusing on compounding. It offers custom-created pharmaceutical and wellness products. Based in Thiensville, Wis. In Ozaukee County, it's become a premier destination for integrative wellness. The staff includes two pharmacists, one resident pharmacist, four full-time pharmacy technicians, and four part-time pharmacy technicians, who dispense around 100 prescriptions daily. The primary goal of Welltopia Pharmacy is "to cultivate a healthy environment where patients can receive the highest quality pharmaceuticals, vitamins, and wellness guidance available in the greater Milwaukee area of Wisconsin. The pharmacy offers patients access to a wide range of comprehensive products and services to help address each of their unique needs and health goals." The pharmacy prides itself on being a neighborhood pharmacy that can provide most services

to the community. Omar Eliwa, RPh, the owner and manager at Welltopia Pharmacy, leads the pharmacy while providing high-quality services to every customer.

Eliwa graduated with a bachelor's degree in pharmaceutical sciences from Cairo University in Giza, Egypt in 2007. He came to the United States to complete an internship in 2010 and then became a registered pharmacist. In 2017, after working as a pharmacist at an independent pharmacy for four years, Eliwa decided to open Welltopia Pharmacy.

Day to Day Practice

As the pharmacist-owner and manager, Eliwa needs to be a jack of all trades and flexible with his time. Some days, he provides vaccinations, while he also must lead team meetings and perform duties like keeping track of the payroll. What he enjoys the most is providing medication consultation to patients, and spending time directly with patients to answer all their questions and address their concerns.

Moreover, for the pharmacy to successfully operate each day, Eliwa reviews the required daily tasks (like compounding, vaccinations, COVID point-of-care testing, etc.) and delegates to his team members, who collaborate to meet each day's requirements.

Raising the Bar

Welltopia Pharmacy was designed with a unique, patient-centered layout and look. The design aims to make each patient feel cared for in an exceptional way. When you walk into the pharmacy, you notice what sets it apart—the lighting, the services, etc. Meanwhile, the team's main goal is to make sure that everyone is being treated well. Providing good customer service is a top priority for Welltopia Pharmacy. Furthermore, the team strives to always provide a high quality of services.

One area where Welltopia Pharmacy stands out is in compounding prescriptions. Some compounded prescriptions may take hours to make. Compounding—and thus an extremely thorough commitment

Below left: Outside Welltopia Pharmacy in Thiensville, Wisconsin. Bottom right: Omar Eliwa, RPh, Owner & Manager, Welltopia Pharmacy



to patient care—is a point of pride for Welltopia Pharmacy. Another way the pharmacy focuses on the patient is through script packaging, which helps empower patients to take their medication appropriately and minimizes hassle. Furthermore, the pharmacy provides high-quality supplements, about which the pharmacy team is extremely knowledgeable. They share that education with their patients. Welltopia Pharmacy ensures every service that it provides adds value for patients.

In addition to focusing on high-quality patient care, Eliwa believes diversification is a key to the success of his pharmacy.

Eliwa created a vision when planning to open Welltopia Pharmacy, which included a diverse set of pharmacy services. Before launching the pharmacy, he spent two years planning. Of course, Eliwa believes that, to be successful, people need to work hard to reach their goals. If mistakes or barriers come up along the way, it is important to learn from them, and then fix the problem or adapt to achieve success. Most importantly, he also points out that there are many key players in the pharmacy's success. Eliwa admires and values his team members. He believes that his team is the key to the success of Welltopia Pharmacy, and everyone is focused on the successes of the whole team.

Bumps in the Road

Every business encounters challenges. For Welltopia Pharmacy, opening and running an independent pharmacy requires

a diverse set of skills. Unique challenges for independent pharmacy owners include budgeting within a business plan; creating roles and hiring the right employees; figuring out how to sustain profits; pursuing innovation; and finding investors. To overcome these challenges, Eliwa focuses on improving himself and being a life-long learner. Nothing comes easily within independent pharmacy practice, because most tools and processes need to be built from scratch. However, Eliwa has the passion to create new services and figure out how to operationalize them.

Another area that requires constant attention is the need for financial sustainability. To overcome limitations in reimbursement from insurance companies and to help Welltopia grow in its mission, Eliwa works on diversification by offering affordable cash prices for compounding and supplements. This approach helps Welltopia Pharmacy survive among competitors. At the end of the day, Eliwa believes that, if people do the right thing and put the patient first, they will be rewarded for it.

Moving Forward

Welltopia Pharmacy is a large part of Eliwa's life, and is where he spends most of his time and effort. His strong passion and vision have helped grow the pharmacy business, and he plans on focusing on the team and maintaining good hiring practices, because there is always a need for technicians to serve his pharmacy. For now, Welltopia Pharmacy desires to offer more services that fit its community's needs.

Based on this experience, Eliwa advises all pharmacists who want to open an independent pharmacy to obtain experience in the field for at least a few years. Pharmacists need to know and understand their strengths, weakness, passion, vision, goals, and make a plan to make it happen successfully. During the planning period, the pharmacist should find a mentor for discussion and guidance. Additionally, a pharmacist needs to start with writing a strong business plan, especially focusing on the pharmacy services that they would like to incorporate (e.g., compounding, vaccination administration, script packaging) and how to make that plan sustainable financially. Welltopia Pharmacy holds a strong passion for the community and hopes for improvement and growth through innovation and patient-centered care as an independent community pharmacy in Wisconsin.

Sochenda Pen is a 2024 Doctor of Pharmacy Candidate at the Medical College of Wisconsin in Milwaukee, WI.

Disclosure: The author(s) declare no real or potential conflicts or financial interest in any product or service mentioned in the manuscript, including grants, equipment, medications, employment, gifts, and honoraria.

References

1. Welltopia. 2022. Accessed 17 January 2022. <https://www.welltopiarx.com>
2. Welltopia Pharmacy. Mtchamber.org. Published 2022. Accessed 17 January 2022. <https://www.mtchamber.org/list/member/welltopia-pharmacy-2532>

2022 PSW ANNUAL MEETING

Navigating the Changing Tides of Healthcare

Thursday-Saturday, August 25-27, 2022
Kalahari Resort & Convention Center, Wisconsin Dells

