

It's Time for EPIC Leadership

by Melissa Theesfeld, PharmD



I recently had the privilege of attending the Decker-Temple Leadership Conference, a unique personal and professional growth opportunity hosted jointly by the Pharmacy Society of Wisconsin and the Iowa Pharmacy Association. Pharmacy leaders early in their careers from Wisconsin and Iowa gathered to hone their communication skills; discuss diversity, equity, and inclusion; and have a little fun getting to know their colleagues.

During our final session with the participants, we asked them to share how they were feeling and what they were taking away from the conference. It was perhaps the most engaging and emotional part of our time together. One of the participants called the Leadership Conference experience EPIC – engaging, passionate, inclusive, and caring. And he was right! The experience itself was EPIC. But as I reflected on the conference in the following weeks, I realized that, perhaps even more importantly, the people were also EPIC!

Our profession has been faced with tough challenges lately. In addition to the COVID public health crisis, we are navigating workforce shortages, an opioid crisis, drug pricing transparency issues, healthcare disparities, and payment for pharmacist-provided services. We have had to change our practices, change our roles, and change how we care for patients. But with all of these changes comes opportunity. Steve Jobs once said “Innovation is the ability to see change as an opportunity - not a threat.” I think it is so important that everyone in our pharmacy profession embrace this mindset. Change is an opportunity. It is scary and overwhelming

and time-consuming and hard. But change is an opportunity. It’s an opportunity to innovate and be at the forefront of some really important healthcare solutions. It’s an opportunity to be visible in our communities and serve patients who might not have other access to healthcare. And it’s an opportunity to improve the lives of others around us.

All of this change requires EPIC leadership. Some of us have official, formal leadership roles. Others don’t have the terms “manager” or “director” in their job title. But I believe that true leadership isn’t about the job title we have or the position we hold. We can all be engaged, passionate, inclusive, and caring. We can all model these attributes in our mindset and actions. And we can all view change as an opportunity. Our influence as both formal and informal leaders extends broadly to affect our patients, colleagues, and communities. Regardless of title, others are looking to us and to our profession for advice, comfort, and reassurance. Our EPIC leadership is needed!

The rate of change in healthcare is not likely to slow down any time soon and the challenges we face probably won’t get any easier to tackle. Our PSW community remains strong and is always working to do what is best for our patients. We all remain united as pharmacy professionals with PSW’s “one voice, one vision” motto. I am excited to hear how your EPIC leadership has influenced others and affected change!

- Melissa Theesfeld, PharmD
PSW President