

ROSALIND FRANKLIN UNIVERSITY OF MEDICINE AND SCIENCE STUDENT WRITING CLUB:

Business Member Spotlight: Andrea Maier

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Andrea “Drea” Maier, PharmD, is the Director of Ambulatory Pharmacy and Population Health for the Wisconsin region of SSM Health. She attended the University of Wisconsin-Madison for her undergraduate and graduate degrees. After graduating from UW-Madison in 2007, she went on to complete a postgraduate year one (PGY1) residency at UnityPoint Health-Meriter Hospital in Madison. Maier completed student rotations during pharmacy school at this specific location, which inspired her to apply for the PGY1 residency to further her pharmacy education. After completion of her PGY1 training, she was offered an inpatient clinical pharmacist position at Meriter Hospital. After covering a variety of clinical areas, she was promoted to general medicine lead pharmacist and frequently covered the emergency room. Years of hospital practice provided her with many examples of situations where improved medication management and patient education in the ambulatory setting could have prevented hospitalizations and enhanced patient care.

In general, she notes that her own road to pharmacy was an unconventional path. Growing up, she had frequent ear infections, during which she would go to her hometown family pediatric clinic to be greeted by a familiar face, Pharmacist Sue. Sue was always kind and caring. She sparked Maier’s interest in medicine and community service. In high school, Maier shadowed Sue a few times to learn about pharmacy practice and about the community she served. While at one point she was torn between wanting to become a pharmacist or a chemistry professor, her love for pharmacy ultimately won in the end.

Day-to-Day Practice

As the Director of Ambulatory Pharmacy and Population Health at SSM

Health, Maier currently oversees and coordinates ambulatory pharmacy practices across the WI region, including primary care, infectious disease, and anticoagulation services. Within this administrative role, her goal is to “grow pharmacy in innovative ways and [take] the ambulatory care setting in new directions by expanding access and advancing practice.” She is currently achieving—and exceeding—these goals. Her passion for teamwork, ambulatory care, and pharmacy as a whole helps drive her and her teams to produce cutting-edge work at SSM Health. Her teams directly handle chronic disease management and have the opportunity to work in broad collaborative practice agreements, allowing them to work at the top of their license and positively impact patient care on a large scale. Maier herself notes that she greatly enjoyed working with patients for 15 years before transitioning to a fully administrative role in 2021.

Maier enjoys completing site visits at various SSM ambulatory care clinics, where she directly observes the pharmacist-patient workflow, engages with team members and clinic leaders, and helps to optimize their internal functions to further patient care. While her day-to-day work now involves more meetings with colleagues than patients, she enjoys being a leader for her teams and advocating for the growth of ambulatory care pharmacy. To support her role, she relies on her colleagues and boss, Kristin Cannon. Maier notes that she admires Cannon’s leadership qualities and ability to navigate a large healthcare system and break down barriers that come their way. Looking toward the future, Maier would like to continue her current role and grow the field as well as the appreciation for ambulatory care.

Raising the Bar

Over the years, Maier has been consistent in her advocacy for the future

of pharmacy while still paying homage to its roots. At its core, pharmacy provides patients with direct medical access and education surrounding medications. Maier has taken her experiences from the acute care setting and rebranded what it means to be an ambulatory care pharmacist by helping build and expand the ambulatory care program at her site. She has continued to advocate for expanding the role of ambulatory care pharmacists as providers and increasing access to medication therapy management in all communities to overhaul and emphasize the meaning behind being the most accessible healthcare professional. Maier frequently draws inspiration for her expansive ideas from her small-town roots and braces them with servant leadership to her teams to bring them across the finish line.

She was recently appointed to the PSW Board of Directors, where she demonstrates proactive leadership by advocating for the pharmacy profession and its forthcoming advancements. She takes pride in the characteristics that her colleagues observed in her, which has pushed her to become a board member and further her reach in the local and state pharmacy communities. Maier and her colleagues on the Board of Directors and PSW staff team see a great multitude of advancements in the near future for pharmacy in Wisconsin.

Bumps in the Road

Ambulatory care pharmacists have historically been overlooked and have had difficulty advocating for their positions. In pursuit of creating more pharmacist positions, Maier actively meets with other healthcare leaders to show them the many benefits of having an ambulatory care pharmacist on their team. In her position, she has had difficulties with pushback, funding constraints, and challenges in adapting workflows across the state and system. Despite these challenges, Maier is

taking on the responsibility of expanding ambulatory care as she recognizes the collaborative effort that is essential for quality patient care.

Maier also notes that her road to her current position was unusual. She began her pharmacy journey filled with a passion for retail pharmacy, inspired by Pharmacist Sue, but veered off to pursue acute care post-graduation. While she was content in her role as an acute care pharmacist, she felt that she was missing an essential element of her practice in being able to see the long-term outcomes and improved quality of life that medication management services bring to our patients. This element drove her to where she is now. She feels very fortunate to have joined an organization that had senior pharmacy leaders who were forward-thinking and saw the vision for what the ambulatory services could be. These leaders became great mentors as she grew in her leadership roles. She is grateful to them for where she is today. It is no small feat to trailblaze a new path, but it is an even bigger challenge to take on a leadership role with a hefty amount of responsibility for teams, patient care, and the establishment of new practices. She had to figure out how to fearlessly lead by example and manage a wide variety of teams quickly.

Moving Forward

Looking toward the future, she would like to see the expansion of ambulatory care practice at all SSM sites and be able to easily demonstrate the amazing patient outcomes as well as financial benefits achieved by her outstanding team. Currently, her team and organization's primary emphasis is management of patients with diabetes, heart failure, and anticoagulation, as these are areas pharmacists can greatly impact. Expanding the scope and demonstrating the positive impact on quality outcomes of SSM Health's virtual population health pharmacy team is another thing she is looking forward to.

Maier, in her current role as a servant leader, is striving to optimize patient care with the main goal of lifting up others around her, celebrating their accomplishments, and continuing to advance the profession of pharmacy. She says, "An idealistic aspiration would be to continue to advance and expand the practice of pharmacy until all patients with complex medication regimens have the opportunity to have an ambulatory care pharmacist on their care team to optimize and safely manage their medications." Over the next few years, she envisions a future filled with significant opportunities for ambulatory pharmacy practice as the healthcare landscape shifts towards delivering value-

based care.

Maier encourages young pharmacists to take advantage of every opportunity they can. While she did not expect to end up in clinical pharmacy originally, taking advantage of all the circumstances that came her way truly allowed doors to open and led her to her current role. By keeping an open mind in her career and studies, Maier interacted with many pharmacy leaders who influenced her to practice pharmacy as a team player and servant leader. She also notes that building strong relationships within the field will take you further than you expect. After all, our profession appreciates the small connections within it and cultivates an emphasis on building a strong network to rely on. It is pharmacists like Maier who keep our profession moving forward toward new goals and enriching the lives of colleagues and patients alike.

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Disclosures: The authors 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.

Below: Team at SSM Health (bottom left). Drea's family (bottom right).

