



## Menighan takes APhA reins at time of generational change

*In period of change, new exec sees pharmacists' star rising as reform efforts dovetail perfectly with our capabilities*

With the very foundations of health care under debate on Capitol Hill, APhA welcomed a new Executive Vice President/Chief Executive Officer on July 1, one who is no stranger to change. In fact, looking back over his career in pharmacy, he has thrived on it, as an early adopter who has regularly made lemonade while some colleagues focused on lemons.

Thomas E. Menighan, BSP Pharm, MBA, a member of the APhA staff during APhA's last CEO transition two decades ago, sees pharmacy's star rising as a result of a number of forces now at work. "We will play a greater role in health care—a much more relevant role in health care—and there will be a more formal structure for that," he recently told *Pharmacy Today*. He stated, "This is likely to lead to more requirements being placed on pharmacy practice, and I want APhA to lead an effort that makes sure these new hurdles are reasonable and necessary. We want to ensure that pharmacists have the tools needed to expand these roles and prosper as providers of patient care. A lot of folks over the past 20 years have set the stage; now we have to take advantage of our opportunities."

### Roots in the river

A native of West Virginia, Menighan grew up in the small Ohio River town of Sistersville, and the subsequent places he's called home have rarely been far from the water. He knew everyone in his town of 2,500, and most of the local merchants did business at his father's bank. "It really was like growing up in a Norman Rockwell painting," he recalled. Menighan and his two sisters grew up in an 1840s-era Victorian home, one his parents had lived in since 1937. The family just completed restoration of the

home to its original grandeur.

A part-time job in Phillips Pharmacy led Menighan to his chosen career. After graduating from the West Virginia University School of Pharmacy in 1974 and working in chain store management for 5 years, he opened a Medicine Shoppe in Huntington, WV, another Ohio River town about a 3-hour drive

Menighan recalled. "That trait has been important in several settings in my career, ranging from printing mailing labels for local pharmacy associations to using the power of technology to make drugs safer for people to use."

Tom's wife Jeanie was diagnosed with ovarian cancer in 1977, gave birth to daughter Caroline in 1979, and died

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from Sistersville. Frank McClendon, with whom Menighan still owns a home care practice, invited him to an association meeting in 1978, and that sparked Menighan's interest in the importance of organizations within the profession. A couple of years later, one local pharmacy took heed of a notice to bid on the city's prescription benefit for employees, and the other local pharmacies lost all those patients for the following year. But when the time came to bid on the next year's contracts, Menighan had created a network, and the other pharmacist-members of the local association won the business back.

### Growth years

For the next 9 years, Menighan experienced many highs and lows in the personal and professional aspects of his life. His pharmacy practice was on the cutting edge as one of the first to computerize and take advantage of the edge information technology provided. "Working with computers and databases has always come easily for me,"

more than 20 years later of complications from years of cancer chemotherapy. In 1980, Jeanie needed home total parenteral nutrition (TPN) to sustain her. Duke University had a home program Menighan used to administer Jeanie's TPN for 18 months until she could resume eating normally.

Recognizing the broader need for these programs, Menighan partnered with McClendon and a third partner, Harvey Barton, to establish such services in a Medicine Shoppe pharmacy, which was spun off within 2 years to form Total Life Care. While initiating these ventures and helping maintain the health of his family, Menighan also served as president of the West Virginia Pharmacists Association in 1985–86 and traveled as a speaker for APhA on home infusion therapy.

A short time later, when APhA executive John F. Schlegel and Director of Professional Affairs Maude Babington were looking for a pharmacist with state experience to join the APhA staff, Menighan fit the bill perfectly. Observ-

ing that clouds really can have silver linings, he noted, "Early on, we learned to make the best of difficult situations. By the time the APhA offer came along in 1986, Jeanie was on her feet and being a great mom, but I never would have become involved with APhA had I not been exposed to home TPN. Every experience teaches us something if we choose to listen."

While at APhA from 1987 to 1992, Menighan not only worked with home care pharmacists and on other professional issues but also served as the primary contact person for state pharmacy associations. He worked on home infusion issues, interacting with the Joint Commission on standards for pharmacies. When that organization finalized its guidelines, Menighan's home infusion pharmacy in West Virginia was the first to receive accreditation in the state. Also, in 1990, he completed a master's degree in business administration at Averett College in Danville, VA.

Physician dispensing was another major issue that occupied Menighan's time during these APhA years. "Physician dispensing was a victory for pharmacy, especially in the sense that people began to see the conflict of interest that it presented," he recalled. "Once the venture capital that was being thrown into physician dispensing dried up and then-Representative Ron Wyden of Oregon pushed for legislation banning this practice, it went away, for the most part. Certainly, the amount of physician dispensing going on today is not what it might have been if we had not acted in collaboration with other national and state organizations."

The Medicare Catastrophic Coverage Act—passed by Congress but then repealed—also was a major issue for Menighan. By the time he left APhA in 1992, he was Senior Director for External Affairs, overseeing membership, state relations, new business initiatives, and public relations.

### Life after the first APhA stint

After leaving the APhA staff, Menighan built on his staff experiences, especially work on information technology and standards being developed by the National Council for Prescription Drug Programs. He worked with PharMark from 1992 to 1994, helping pharma-



**The APhA senior management team** meeting in 1992 during Menighan's time on staff (seated left to right): Carol Van Nuys, Lucinda Maine, Ron Williams, John Gans; (standing) Joan Zaro, Menighan, and James Caro.

cists within state Medicaid agencies implement drug-use review systems and computer data mining required under the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1990. Using drugs as proxies for diagnosis, the PharMark software, RationalMed, could predict rehospitalizations, and it gained wide use in a short period of time.

In 1994, Menighan decided to move back to West Virginia to continue his work in community pharmacy and infusion services and branch out into several entrepreneurial ventures. By then, the home care operation was an OptionCare franchise, and he worked on that for the next 6 years.

Menighan did it all in these years—pulling pharmacist shifts, working in respiratory and durable medical equipment, and providing infusion therapy. At its peak, his home care operation was dispensing product to and managing patients in 30 states with a staff of 80 employees, including pharmacists, nurses, respiratory techs and others.

In addition to such valuable management experience, Menighan brings to his new position the unique experience of having served on the APhA Board of Trustees from 1995 to 2003 and as the Association's President in the sesquicentennial year of 2001–02.



**Professional Affairs Associate Terri Smith Moore** discusses a new student pharmacist project with Practice Management Associate Menighan (1988).

A number of issues were at the forefront in those years: Concept Pharmacy with the National Wholesale Druggists Association (now the Healthcare Distribution Management Association), formation of a Finance Committee, recognition of publications as a major factor in the APhA financial structure, and long-range planning for the Board of Pharmaceutical Specialties. In addition, much discussion played into the decision to pursue the building of a new annex to APhA's historical building on the National Mall.

Since 2000, Menighan's professional pursuits have centered on two companies he started in the Washington, DC,

area: SymRx, Inc., and SynTegra, LLC. SymRx was a pharmaceutical information technology company that built and provided unique medication use knowledge gathered and disseminated through pharmacies. The company developed a network of pharmacies licensing Internet technologies, including Cornerdrugstore.com and ChainRx.com. The use of SymRx systems and content enabled pharmacies to extend their services to the Internet while maintaining their local brand. The company also built systems to help health care stakeholders measure and improve performance, efficiency, and outcomes associated with medication use. The brand and systems that SymRx developed are still in use today.

After consulting with a variety of organizations after the sale of SymRx in 2002, Menighan founded in 2003 an initiative to deliver a cost-effective, client-configurable suite of operational and regulatory compliance monitoring services, technology and process audits, supply chain accountability, integrity and safety reviews, and risk-management designs; this initiative later became SynTegra. He was President of

and investor in this company last fall when he was selected to succeed John A. Gans, PharmD, as APhA's Executive Vice President and CEO.

### On the horizon

Menighan and his wife Bonny reside in Annapolis, the state capital of Maryland and a city built on the shores of the Chesapeake Bay. When considering

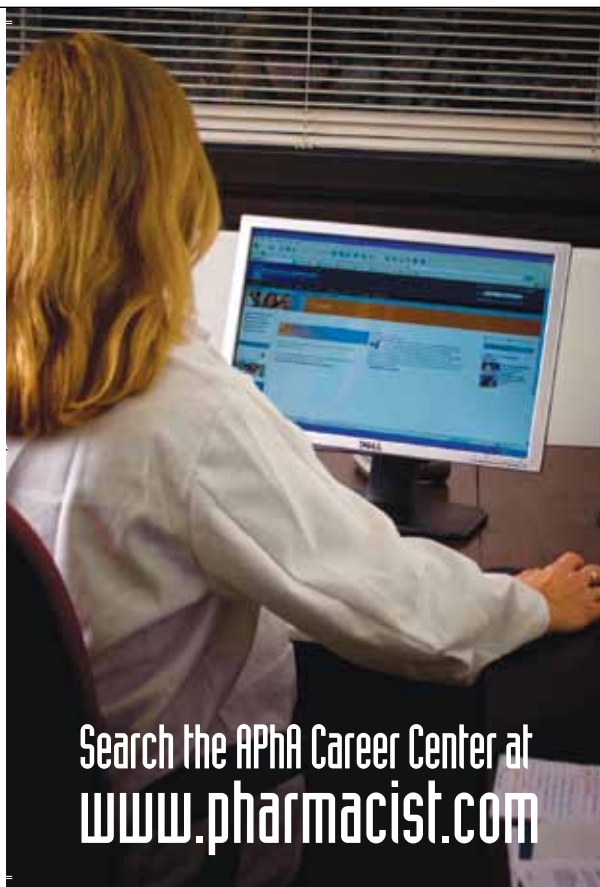
**A** lot of folks over the past 20 years have set the stage.

the new APhA opportunity, Bonny gave him all the encouragement he needed; she said, "Of course you should go for it. You know you'd love it and you'd be good at it!" His daughter Caroline, now grown, lives in Washington, DC, where she works at the Tabard Inn and teaches yoga classes. Tom and Bonny are raising their nephew, or "nephson" Tom likes to say, 13-year-old Alex.

From watching the waters he has spent much of his life near, Menighan understands both the permanence and the flows of rivers and bays. With change in mind, he feels privileged to follow John Gans and grateful for the opportunity to serve. He is already focused on the process and outcomes that appear likely to result from the current health care discussions in Washington. He shared this agenda with **Today**: "Our leadership in health care reform—getting pharmacy to the table—has been critical to the debate on Capitol Hill. In part due to our efforts together with the other national and state pharmacy organizations, we've elevated the consciousness of Congress about the essential role of the pharmacist in patient care.

As we work with legislators to solve the medication use crisis, our interest as an organization representing the professional interests of pharmacists is to make sure that patient care in any reformed health care system includes significant roles for pharmacists. That's our focus. Everything else drives off that."

—L. Michael Posey, BPharm



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