

“The Adventures of a New Practitioner”

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Thank you to Dean, faculty, graduates, family, and friends for the privilege of being here today to share this moment with you, and to offer a few thoughts. The Affordable Care Act was emerging as you entered pharmacy school. Today we're reshaping our current healthcare system, including a focus on team-based care delivery and provider accountability for outcomes. Importantly for you, today, through two Congressional bills, we're in hot pursuit of getting you on the team and in the game as an important member of the emerging health care team. WHEN we achieve legislative success, you will practice in a highly evolved team-based care model. The rules for this game aren't fully written yet, so you will need to stay closely connected to your profession. And, you'll need to be lifelong learners.

I like to think I am a lifelong learner. I learned something about cookies recently.

On an evening when events keep me in DC, I stay over instead of driving the 35 miles home. Recently, I spent my first night in a quirky new hotel. In the morning, I grabbed a cookie from the bowl at the registration desk. I chewed, and the taste sank in. Hints of liver and grain brought the realization that I had just popped a dog biscuit into my mouth in what was clearly a dog friendly hotel.

Not to look foolish, I finished it off.

I admit, it was a little dry, and not very sweet, but the second one wasn't too bad!

The point is, I learned something from my mistake— cookies are better than dog biscuits!

And along the way, we've learned a few things about leadership. Today, APhA is investing millions of dollars so consumers can have access to your care. We lead a large coalition of stakeholders, the PAPCC, including over 35 organizations united in the cause to secure provider status for pharmacists. We work hard to build and maintain this unity in the profession! Unity was built around an equation that led to an “ask” of key bill sponsors in the House and Senate.

That equation, vetted over 3 years and agreed to by virtually all national and state pharmacy organizations is essentially “Which pharmacists, which patients, and which services?” Each variable is a major factor in the ultimate cost of legislation that we’re asking Congress to pass. When consensus was achieved in November 2013, the strongest coalition of pharmacy organizations in history banded together to gain introduction and support for legislation. The consensus equation we “asked” was to allow all pharmacists to provide medically underserved Medicare beneficiaries covered services that are within each state scope of practice.

Many of you engaged as students to help shape your future through APhA’s Pharmacists Provide Care Campaign (www.pharmacistsprovidecare.com). You are part of something greater than your next job. Keep investing in your career the way you did in your formal education. It’s time to “RE-UP for advocacy, as new practitioners.

To make your personal pitch succinctly takes some work. It took me six years to refine my own to 12 words:

We promote consumer access and coverage for pharmacists’ quality patient care services.

And this is a great jumping off point for conversations in support of provider status. But for consumers to gain that access, we need your help. You’ve GOT to show up! Take the time to develop a powerful anecdote of how you’ve helped a patient. Make it clear and concise, as concise as my elevator pitch. Then be prepared to build on it by sharing your story with friends, colleagues and Congressmen.

You’ll have to be flexible in this rapidly changing profession, so I’m going to share an important concept with you. When threatened, our bodies release adrenaline to prepare for “fight or flight.” I call a lesser known mechanism the “Flying Leap Response.” Each of us, if we think about it, can remember someone who offered an unexpected observation that we didn’t see coming, but that changed our lives. It may have been “Have you ever thought about going to pharmacy school?” Regardless of any prior thoughts of your own, this external validation caused you to act by taking a “flying leap” to a new job or career. We’ve all had these powerful moments. For me, one was when a colleague called me in 2008 to encourage a look at the APhA CEO position – the position I hold today. It was something I had given some vague thought, but his challenge was the external validation I needed to take a flying leap from the safety of the consulting practice I had created.

The point isn’t only that you benefit from those moments. You can cause them by recognizing strengths and sharing those observations with your peers. External validation is an awesome power for positive change. I encourage you to use it, especially in these next few very formative years in your careers.

As new practitioners, you will be faced with many realities, such as a resistance to change, practice settings that focus more on dispensing than on care, unfamiliar demands, evolving

standards and practice models, and a soft economy. Those who continue their lifelong learning will excel. If you would like to know more about what to expect, go to www.pharmacist.com where this speech is posted, along with a series of insights from our new practitioner leadership.

The Affordable Care Act expanded opportunities for us to play an enhanced, although more accountable role in team-based health care. But new roles won't just be handed to us. We must secure our roles on the health care team to improve medication use and advance patient care. We do that by taking very complex information and simplifying it. We have a medication USE crisis. Society provides most medicines to most people, but we lack access and coverage for your services to build patient KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, and PERFORMANCE necessary to improve outcomes of medication use. That's your story! You can fill that need!

Let me share a brief history about how I landed on this stage today as a full time CEO of APhA. My chemistry set in fifth grade and the guidance of a great mentor led me to pharmacy. Years later, it would be a "Flying Leap Response" that led me to leave my WV Medicine Shoppe in 1987 and move to DC as an APhA staffer. The same applied to my other job positions, each setting a new, uncharted path in DUR, Web Services, and novel supply chain work. My career has been guided by colleagues and friends. Their wisdom came to me through volunteer involvement and networking provided in many local, state and national organizations, including service as APhA's elected president in 2001-2002. I learned that volunteerism not only feels good but reaps huge dividends.

Today, after a life of volunteerism and ventures, I'm investing the rest of my career to advance patient care and to seek **your** essential place on the health care team as recognized providers.

Most of you entered pharmacy school in hopes of making a difference, and as our profession's star continues to rise, you will have that opportunity.

So how will YOU make a difference? Perhaps it will be in chronic disease management. Pharmacists providing care is one major solution to the country's medication USE crisis I mentioned earlier! But patients need access and coverage for our care. And, as is often said "Patients don't care how much you know until they know how much you care."

Our current system, sorely in need of reform, is like someone else paying a restaurant for our meal based on how many pounds we eat. If we want to be taken seriously as care providers, then Quality trumps quantity! If you've followed health care reforms, you know that we are moving toward a health care system that rewards excellence rather than volume.

Increasingly, excellence is measured in the outcomes of patient care. For pharmacists to be part of that equation, we must be accountable for outcomes. Accountability for quality care means ascribing to standards. APhA has initiatives underway to support your activities in this area.

And I can fairly say we've got the momentum!

- MTM is growing.
- Value evidence is mounting
- Workforce capacity is expanding
- media attention increasing
- Managing costs NEEDS pharmacists
- New services developing
- Inter-professional care is evolving

These opportunities are team-based as more professionals are being trained inter-professionally – In fact, like our own, standards in nearly all disciplines require it. It is a compelling argument for pharmacists’ provider status that we’re trained together as student professionals, and therefore need to be empowered to practice that way upon graduation.

And as more pharmacists develop collaborative practice agreements with other providers, and ACOs establish incentives for outcomes of quality medication use, we’ll need to be on the team. When we’re on the team, we can make a difference!

Systems are recognizing we are capable providers in an incapable system, and that we have the expertise needed to help solve the medication use crisis. We have the personal relationships as trusted health care advisors with patients necessary to really connect for lasting change. Opportunities and incentives are following. Our job is to help accelerate that change.

I mentioned earlier that APhA is one of the leaders of a large coalition. This coalition, focused on influencing Congress is known as the Patient Access to Pharmacists’ Care Coalition (www.pharmacistscare.com). The coalition, as an amazing force worked with sponsors to introduce a bill in the House (HR 592) and the Senate (S 314) to secure provider status for pharmacists in the Social Security Act. You can read about it on www.pharmacist.com.

APhA’s “Pharmacist Provide Care” campaign informs pharmacists and provides tools for you to advocate for your profession. Our extensive research on pharmacists’ value demonstrates our impact on clinical and economic outcomes is positive and growing.

And the public is ready to support us. They think of us as health care providers now, as most are surprised to learn that we are not already covered as providers.

The Provider Status we seek in Congress is a link between the care pharmacists ALREADY provide, and the care we COULD provide if we were properly recognized.

When pharmacists across the profession and country unite, with a unified message, the results are powerful.

So, you have a choice, right now, TODAY. You can approach the rest of your career as just a job, OR, you can be a professional and show up. That means more than acquiring and applying a body of knowledge and skills. It means sharing commitment, being willing to self-regulate, and living a code of ethics. As Professionals, we have rights, but we also have a contract with society based on trust and a willingness to put patients first in the quest for healing.

This will require each of **you** to commit some of your time, talent and treasure to your pharmacy family and I encourage you to do so.

My hope also is that some of you will take the wonderful education you have received, thanks to this University, mentors, your families and your own hard work and make a difference every day in patients' lives.

From my experience, whatever you invest in time, talent or treasure for our profession will pay off! PLEASE don't fade into the shadows of obscurity. **Show up. Stay engaged. Serve.** If you remember anything about today, remember that!

“Showing up” means staying informed about your profession, and that means continuing to support your college throughout your career, maintaining your memberships in your local, state, practice setting and professional associations and reading professional journals. And being ready to make a pitch for your profession.

You won't remember everything I said today, but I hope you remember feeling committed to keep showing up.

You will create many stories along this new path you are starting today -- the stories that help paint the picture for our case – Stand up and share those stories. Help us make a difference!

Today, I am proud to call you fellow pharmacists. Congratulations to your family and friends for their achievements in supporting you and for your own accomplishments.

Dr. Suess said “Don't cry because it's over, smile because it happened!”

As my first dean challenged us – “You are now entering a profession where you'll never have to worry about making a living, so worry about making a difference!”

For what you will contribute to our profession and to patient care, I thank you!

Go out and make a difference!