

Nourishing the Soul of Pharmacy: Stories of Reflection

I recently read the book *Nourishing the Soul of Pharmacy: Stories of Reflection*, which is published by the American College of Clinical Pharmacy.¹ The title of the book references a quotation from William Zellmer, long-time editor of the *American Journal of Health-System Pharmacy* and coeditor of this volume: “Depth, value, relatedness, heart, and personal substance. People want and need pharmacists with those characteristics—pharmacists with soul.”¹ This book project began in January 2011, when a call was put out for pharmacists to write about their reflections on clinical pharmacy practice. The editors’ goal “was to stimulate activity in a type of reflective inquiry that would enhance empathy for patients and elicit deeper bonds between practitioners. This is part of a larger effort to humanize pharmacy practice as it continues to evolve in the direction of a patient-centered ethos.”¹ They eventually received 140 submissions from pharmacists (and pharmacy students), from which they selected 69 for inclusion in the final publication. These essays reflect a broad range of pharmacy practice. They include stories from pharmacists near the battlefield, on medical missions, in the expert witness stand, and working with the drug information department of the US Food and Drug Administration. But mostly these are stories from pharmacists (and pharmacy students) working in hospitals, ambulatory clinics, and community pharmacies, reflecting on their interactions with patients.

I had never read a book quite like this before, a book in which pharmacists are articulate not only about clinical facts, but about their heartfelt response to patients and their suffering. The pharmacists who contributed to this book provide vivid accounts of their interactions with patients in a variety of care settings. They are honest about their emotional responses to the patient needs that they encounter. They describe the insights they have gained and how they have been changed by their experiences. In short, the humanity of pharmacists is on display throughout this book. For the most part, I found that the stories included in this volume

did achieve the editors’ goal of enhancing empathy for patients and creating a closer connection with my fellow pharmacists. The stories of deep connection between pharmacist and patients have inspired me to reach out in greater compassion to the patients and families I work with in the intensive care unit. The book has, in a sense, given me permission to move beyond my cognitive skills and reach out in a new way to patients and families, to see them as persons first instead of merely recognizing them by their disease states.

I have written this correspondence because I think that *Nourishing the Soul of Pharmacy* is a gem of a book that I want other Canadian pharmacists to know about. At the same time, there are two groups in particular who I hope will take note of this volume: first, pharmacist educators, particularly those in charge of experiential and residency programs—the stories in this book and the art of reflection that they exemplify could be especially important for pharmacists in the early stages of their career; and second, personnel involved in pharmacist publications such as *CJHP*—perhaps a similar call could be put forth for stories of reflection from Canadian pharmacists. It would be great to have stories of connection with patients from the perspective of Canadian pharmacists. Who knows, we may even surprise ourselves with our own depth of soul.

Reference

1. Zlatic TD, Zellmer WA, editors. *Nourishing the soul of pharmacy: stories of reflection*. Lenexa (KS): American College of Clinical Pharmacy; 2011.

Mark Friesen, PharmD, MSc, BScPharm
Clinical Pharmacist, Critical Care
Winnipeg Regional Health Authority Pharmacy Program
Grace Hospital
Winnipeg, Manitoba

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