

Hospital Pharmacy Management— What a Career!

Shallen Letwin

I was kind of a weird kid, in the sense that I knew I wanted to be a pharmacist from the time I was in grade 9. The mother of one of my closest friends was a community pharmacist, and I was intrigued by what she did. I asked my friend's mother many questions, did some research on my own, and decided that I definitely wanted to be a pharmacist.

For many young students, identifying a career, studying to complete the requirements, and finding satisfying employment are all challenges. Fortunately, the first and last of these came easily for me.

I started my career as a community pharmacist but soon switched to the hospital environment, where I worked as a staff clinical pharmacist for several years. During that time, I observed pharmacy managers putting into action ideas, plans, and programs that elevated the practice of hospital pharmacy and helped many patients. I too was passionate about pharmacy practice and wanted to help “make things happen” as a manager.

After completing my PharmD, my first formal leadership position was as a clinical coordinator. In this role, I led a fantastic group of pharmacists striving for outstanding patient care. We were all committed to preventing, identifying, and resolving drug-related problems. I was also part of a management team and had opportunities to express my opinions, vision, and ideas about hospital pharmacy practice.

Later, I took on the role of regional pharmacy manager and became interested in many other aspects of hospital pharmacy management, especially new programs that advanced clinical practice roles for pharmacists, human resources, strategic planning, and advocating for the profession.

About 18 months ago, the position of regional director of pharmacy services at Fraser Health in British Columbia became available. Although I knew that eventually I wanted to be a pharmacy director, the opportunity presented itself earlier than expected. I had just been elected a presidential officer for CSHP and was

not sure if I could take on the challenges of 2 new roles in the same year. However, many opportunities come around only once, and I couldn't take the chance of missing out—I applied for the position!

Many pharmacists who are considering a formal leadership position worry about giving up other activities (such as clinical work and teaching). I believe that moving into a formal hospital pharmacy management position does not have to mean giving up any of these activities; rather, a shift in emphasis may be needed to accommodate new responsibilities.

To return to my own story, I was promoted to become regional director—pharmacy services for Fraser Health, and I now lead a fantastic department of over 300 people across 12 sites. As well, I continue to work in the Congestive Heart Failure Clinic, I am a clinical assistant professor in the Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences at the University of British Columbia, and I am the course coordinator for a new pharmacotherapy course at the University College of the Fraser Valley. Variety is the spice of life.

As some of you consider roles in hospital pharmacy management, remember that the opportunities are endless, the career is extremely rewarding, and the impact you can have on patient care is enormous. Hospital pharmacy management—what a career!



Shallen Letwin, BScPharm, PharmD, FCSHP, is Past President and External Liaison of CSHP.