

The Long and Winding Road

Emily Lap Sum Musing

Recently, I had the pleasure of facilitating a round-table discussion on the topic of pharmacy leadership at CSHP's Professional Practice Conference. Our conversation ranged from a debate about what characteristics are needed in hospital pharmacy leaders to suggestions of how to interest pharmacists in becoming leaders and how to support them as they move into leadership roles. I was impressed with the level of thought that participants had put into this topic as well as the passion with which they shared their perspectives. My involvement in that day's exchange led me to think back on my own path to becoming a pharmacy administrator.

Before accepting my current position, I had taken on many roles as a pharmacist in various hospital settings. My circuitous route highlights my theory about pharmacy administrators, which parallels my personal theory about Oriental women. Have you ever noticed that you rarely see Oriental women who look middle-aged? Oriental women seem to fall into 2 distinct groups: those who look like they are in their mid-thirties, at most, and the "little old ladies" with grey hair, half bent over with osteoporosis. There seems to be no transitional age group to guide you from one extreme to the other. Pharmacy administration sneaks up on you like that. You graduate, an eager young pharmacist armed with your newly minted license to practise. You work hard and do your best. Then one day, you take a good look at yourself in the rearview mirror and realize, "I'm a pharmacy administrator!" You don't know how it happened. You're not sure you're ready for it, and there doesn't seem to be any way to go back.

In this day and age, when clinical practice rather than administration seems to be the career goal for many hospital pharmacists, how do we help direct our future leaders on this road less travelled? We need to look for ways to expose practitioners to management leadership early in their careers, so that they can gain an appreciation

of the benefits of this career path. Those interested in administration should be given the opportunity to test-drive the role, thus gaining both the skills and the confidence to move further in this direction. By sharing our own experiences, current leaders can

show others that there are many possible pathways to this destination and that there are numerous guideposts along the way, ranging from in-house management-development programs provided by various hospitals, to postgraduate university courses (e.g., master's degree in business or health administration), to workshops provided by such organizations as the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists. Most importantly, pharmacy administrators need to share with others the excitement, pride, and satisfaction they feel on a daily basis because they are in a position to affect the care of patients throughout the hospital, the quality of work-life for pharmacy staff, and the effectiveness of their institution within the health care continuum.

I hope I have interested some people in taking a step toward administration. While the road to hospital pharmacy administration may sometimes be a bumpy one and we may be faced with roadblocks or detours along the way, I know that if you choose to embark on this trail, you will find yourself on an incredible journey!



Emily Lap Sum Musing, RPh, BScPhm, MHSc, ACPR, FCSHP, CHE, is President and Internal Liaison of CSHP.