

When It's No Longer the Exception, but the Rule!

One of my most rewarding aspects of my career was proving that clinical services can be provided in the community pharmacy setting. Leaving my academic position, in 2006, from the University of Iowa College of Pharmacy and becoming co-owner of a community pharmacy practice was my way of demonstrating my deep belief that this could be accomplished. What I encountered when I made this decision caught me by surprise though. There were naysayers who believed that this could not be done and that I would not be successful. There were others who believed that if it was successful—it was the exception—not the rule and could not be duplicated. As I ventured into business ownership, I realized that I need to “block out all of this noise” that was putting doubt on my vision for community pharmacy practice and put all my energies and focus on creating my vision—to transform a community pharmacy practice to provide patient care services and create new revenue streams from these services.

It is interesting to note that after fifteen years in ownership, successfully transforming the practice at Towncrest Pharmacy and proving our value to payers, there are still those who do not believe that clinical services can exist or be delivered in the community pharmacy setting. In fact, it is disheartening to hear others speak of community pharmacy as just a “retail practice”—a practice focused on dispensing and not on patient care. This has been a one of my major frustrations of my career—continuing to prove and prove again that clinical services can be and ARE delivered to patients within a community pharmacy.

Having multiple roles within the Flip the Pharmacy experience has given me a renewed passion, belief, and energy to prove, yet again, that this is NO LONGER the EXCEPTION—but rather THE RULE—community pharmacists who commit to practice transformation CAN AND DO provide enhanced clinical services that help patients optimize their medications. It has also been very motivating for me this year to watch community pharmacists tackle major issues from opioid stewardship to responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Many of our pharmacies have been involved in vaccinating our communities. New relationships with key stakeholders (e.g.; local public health departments) have been created, the public is witnessing the value of community pharmacies as being accessible health care centers that provide a range of services including point of care testing, chronic care management (CCM), transitions of care, comprehensive medication management (CMM), and continuous medication monitoring (CoMM).

If I have learned anything this past year, it is that community pharmacists are some of the most innovative and entrepreneurial minded health care professionals. If there are obstacles in their way, they find a way to manage and overcome them even in the midst of extreme challenges. More payer programs are being initiated even during these most challenging times because of the VALUE that community pharmacy staff bring to their communities. This is no longer the exception—this is how we practice; this is our new standard; this is our future. It is being demonstrated day in and day out by our 800+ pharmacies participating in Flip the Pharmacy.

I have never been prouder to say that I practice in a community pharmacy and I provide clinical services to my patients daily! As we move into our next progression focused on Diabetes and Social Determinants of Health (SDoH), let's continue to demonstrate how we can help our patients optimize their medications by working collaboratively with the health care team—sharing patient information, making clinical recommendations, monitoring and following up with our patients to ensure that they are achieving their therapeutic outcomes with safe and effective medications, and of course documenting our patient care plans.