

LETTERS FOR YOUR NEXT ACT

Navigating a Purposeful Retirement

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to the pharmacists who are in the later stages of their careers and willing to share their thinking about what is next for them.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	vii
Preface.....	ix

LETTERS

<i>Christina Adams</i> , BScPhm, ACPR, DPLA.....	1
<i>Stephen Allen</i> , BSP Pharm, MS, FASHP	5
<i>Daniel M. Ashby</i> , BSP Pharm, MS, FASHP.....	9
<i>Christine Berger</i> , PharmD	15
<i>Cindi Brennan</i> , PharmD, MHA.....	21
<i>Richard Caldwell</i> , MS.....	27
<i>Bill Campbell</i> , BSP Pharm, MS, PhD.....	33
<i>Jannet M. Carmichael</i> , BS, PharmD, FCCP, FAPhA, BCPS.....	39
<i>John E. Clark</i> , PharmD, MS, FASHP.....	45
<i>Lea S. Eiland</i> , PharmD, BCPS, BCPPS, FASHP, FPPA.....	51
<i>David W. Fuhs</i> , PharmD, MS, FASHP	55
<i>Tim S. Fuller</i> , RPh, MS, FASHP	61
<i>Tracy Furgiuele</i> , RPh	67
<i>Mick Hunt</i> , MS, MBA, FASHP	71
<i>Marianne F. Ivey</i> , PharmD, MPH, FASHP, FFIP.....	77
<i>Christene Jolowsky</i> , MS, RPh, FASHP	83
<i>Patricia (Patti) C. Kienle</i> , RPh, MPA, BCSCP, FASHP.....	89
<i>Bonnie Kirschenbaum</i> , MS, FASHP, FCSHP.....	95
<i>Henri R. Manasse Jr.</i> , BS, MA, PhD, ScD (Hon), FFIP.....	101
<i>Gregory A. (Gregg) Matsch</i> , RPh, PharmD, BCPS.....	107
<i>Jennifer R. Moore</i> , PharmD.....	113
<i>Lois Ann Murray</i> , RPh	119
<i>Michael Mustard</i> , BSP Pharm.....	123
<i>Agatha Nolen</i> , PhD, FASHP, CRCR.....	129

Kathleen (Kathy) S. Pawlicki, MS, FASHP..... 135
Bill Puckett, MS, MBA, RPh, FASHP..... 139
Philip J. Schneider, MS, FASHP, FASPEN, FFIP..... 145
Bonnie Senst, BSP Pharm, MS, FASHP 151
Ulfat Usta Shanouha, PharmD, BCPS, BCSCP, BCNSP, DPLA.....155
Robert J. Weber, PharmD, MS, BCPS, FASHP..... 159
Prati Wojtal, BSP Pharm, MS, FASHP 163

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W*hat's next for you?* Even if you are just starting out in your pharmacy career, it is worth documenting your thoughts and thinking through how you would like your career and life to proceed. Mid- and late-career pharmacists will tell you that time flies by. As with mentors, this *Letters* book joins six others (mid-late careers, rising stars, preceptors, residents, women, and leaders) and shares personal stories and advice based on actual experiences. About half of the letters come from pharmacists who have moved beyond full-time pharmacy work, and the rest are from people who are assessing what their “next act” may be. These pharmacists have had rich careers in areas such as health-system pharmacy practice, leadership, academia, pharmaceutical industry, and state boards of pharmacy.

The authenticity of these letters is overwhelming as the stories are of real life, and all of us will face some of the situations described in the letters. A consistent message is the importance of decisions related to retirement, with advice to start planning early in your career and to take it seriously as you think of yourself in retirement. There are so many aspects to planning and living in retirement, and many are described here.

Of course, financial planning is critical because once you have the time to do what you would like, having the time and the money is even better. Although this topic is discussed from various perspectives, there are several compatible themes, including start saving early in your career, maximize employer-sponsored retirement programs, and engage financial planning professionals and other experts (eg, tax and/or estate planners) as needed. Another theme is that the emotions of hearing your financial professional inform you that your savings will sustain your desired lifestyle through retirement, ranges from skepticism or disbelief to a sense of freedom or pure joy.

There is no consistent answer to the question of “*when is the right time to retire?*” You are the only one who can decide when it is right for you. Moreover, the transition from your career to retirement or from your current career to a different role is highly dependent on your goals for your retirement. However, it is clear that thoughtful planning will ease the transition when you decide it is time. Once you decide to retire, and many advise long before you decide, you need to give thought to how you will spend your time in retirement. You will read different approaches to using your time in retirement including fun-filled activities, such as sailing around the world, volunteering for a cause you are passionate about, and working to further your professional legacy.

Finally, the advice to remain flexible in your plans and to be able to pivot is critical when life gives you the unexpected. Life's unexpected situations come in various shapes and sizes. Some may be illnesses you or your loved ones will endure. Others may be adjusting to plans that did not go as expected, such as not enjoying or embracing retirement as you imagined. Your ability to change plans and manage the unexpected will be as important in retirement as they are during other phases of your life.

Sara, Susan, and Bruce

