



Kathi S. Lucas

Follow Your Heart, Seize Opportunities, and Realize There Are Always Trade-Offs

Kathi is an example of a woman who “has it all.” She is a dedicated pharmacist and has still found the time and energy to be very active in Boy Scout leadership (even after her son completed scouting). Kathi has always consciously prioritized her family equally with her career as her letter describes. Before the advent of the concept of transitions of care, Kathi worked collaboratively with nurses, physicians, social workers, and administrators as the bone marrow transplant clinical pharmacist who took care of both the ambulatory and inpatient stays. She is also an example of a clinical practitioner who moved into formal leadership positions but maintained her BCOP certification and indeed did chose to return to clinical practice.

She completed her bachelor of science in pharmacy at Auburn University and her master’s degree in public health at San Jose State University. Kathi is currently the outpatient pharmacy regulatory compliance pharmacist at Stanford Hospital and Clinics.

She gives this superb advice: *Follow your heart, seize every opportunity, and know that there will always be trade-offs.*



Dear Young Pharmacist,

It seems that I have come to that time in my life when I am supposed to give out some wisdom instead of gathering it up. I am writing to you because I want to share some things I have learned on my journey as a pharmacist in the hopes that it will make your own journey easier.

My first job in pharmacy was a compromise. Fresh out of pharmacy school and newly married I was faced with a huge change. My new husband's job took us from a city in the southeast and the university teaching hospital where I did my clinical rotations to a small town in California. It was 1975, and the doctor of pharmacy program in California was the hottest thing in the pharmacy world. I expected to take everything I had learned, from satellite pharmacies and rounds with doctors to the computerized IV labels and use it wherever I went in California. Enter reality. Small rural hospitals (even if they were in the mecca) did not necessarily operate like a large university teaching hospital. The nurses wrote down the medications they wanted for patients, and the pharmacy sent up a 5-day supply in the dumbwaiter without ever seeing a diagnosis, a laboratory value, or even the nurse.

I chose to work at a small independent retail pharmacy instead of the local hospital. It was not my dream, but it turned out to be a wonderful first pharmacy job. I could talk to patients, and the only doctor in town was happy to discuss the patient's medication if I felt another choice would be better or if there were interactions. I even took medication calls for the office when the doctor was out of town. I learned a lot about running a business, getting along with an experienced staff of diverse older people, hiring and firing, and working in a community. This experience enabled me to grow and gain valuable career skills.

In 1980, newly divorced, I moved to a city because I felt that I had learned all I could in the small town retail store, and I wanted a bigger challenge. I had the opportunity to go back to a community hospital that had satellite pharmacies with pharmacists who were out on the floors making contact with the physicians. I really wanted to be a satellite pharmacist, but I took the central pharmacy position. It was not perfect. I really wanted to get back into hospitals and was certain that if I did not take this opportunity and waited for the perfect position, I would never get back into clinical practice. Within two weeks of my hire, there was an opening that enabled me to get back to the bedside. I worked with a fantastic group of young clinical practitioners and migrated from the entry pool to a permanent position in the intensive care unit (ICU) pharmacy. I learned that it is important to make the best of opportunities as they offer themselves. This experience impressed on me again the lesson that no job is perfect, and you have to make trade-offs.

My next move was due to layoffs. Even as I was going through the grieving process, I knew that this was an emotional reaction, but it did