

Jennifer L. Riggins



There Is No Growth in a Comfort Zone and No Comfort in a Growth Zone

Jennifer is a busy industry professional, association volunteer, avid sports fan, and mother of three young sons. She was initially drawn to the profession of pharmacy because it paid well, offered many diverse career options, and provided the flexibility that she valued. She freely admits the factors that first attracted her to pharmacy are different from those that keep her excited about her work now. She has spent her career in the pharmaceutical industry, working in various roles in medical information and medical affairs. While she is passionate about her work now, her first role as a neuroscience medical information specialist proved to be anything but her dream job. Her letter provides insight into dealing with such a scenario and other challenges that may come your way. She advises you to be courageous and bold, and to look for growth opportunities even if they take you outside your comfort zone.

Jennifer is currently Advisor, Global Medical Channels and eCapabilities in Customer Engagement and Medical Affairs at Eli Lilly and Company in Indianapolis. She has been with Lilly since 1993, serving in a number of progressively responsible positions in medical information, medical communications, and global medical customer solutions. Jennifer received her doctor of pharmacy degree with honors from Butler University. Jennifer provides sage advice: *stay true to yourself and find the right balance in your professional and personal life.*



Dear Young Pharmacist,

I often think back to the time when I chose to become a pharmacist. Why did I make that choice? What impact did that choice have on my life and would I make the same choice again? I can unequivocally say YES! I made the right decision. I went into the field of pharmacy because it seemed like a good, flexible job for a woman. Pharmacy jobs paid well and offered a lot of different options. I stayed because I enjoyed my colleagues; I loved my varied roles and responsibilities, my work environment, and the flexibility of my schedule. Here is my story and my advice to you as a young pharmacist.

More than 20 years ago, I joined the pharmaceutical industry in the medical information department supporting a new antidepressant. I hated it! I hated the neuroscience (NS) area but loved medical information. A colleague joined the area at the same time and focused on anti-infectives. He really enjoyed the NS area and not the anti-infective area, so we switched responsibilities. I became the “antibiotic Queen” providing information to health care providers (HCPs) so that they could make more informed patient decisions. I loved it! Eventually, I moved into other medical affairs’ roles focused on scientific communications and business operations such as strategy, people, process, and tools/technology. However, throughout my various technical and supervisory roles, I stayed closely connected to medical information and HCP customer-facing roles—my passion-focus areas.

Here are my top 10 pieces of advice—learned on the job (some the hard way!).

First, love what you do—you spend too many hours at work not to. Follow your passion—not the money or the title. Those will come on their own. One of the best things about my responsibilities has been the global nature of my roles. I thoroughly enjoy collaborating, supervising, and learning from colleagues around the world. As a result, my viewpoints, experiences, and values are richer and more meaningful. A colleague once said to me, “Isn’t it cool that we can walk through our company’s halls and hear multiple languages, see multiple ethnicities, and experience such diversity of thought and experience?” Indeed, it is!