

Robert J. Weber



My Cancer Experience Taught Me to Put Patients First

Because of his close call with cancer, Bob is very focused on living in the moment, being a better family person, and putting patients first. He shares a patient's perspective on enduring chemotherapy. He is also very dedicated and passionate about continuing The Ohio State Pharmacy Leadership Training Legacy and is the Director of the Latiolais Leadership Program in the College of Pharmacy. For several years, he has authored and coordinated the monthly Director's Forum column in *Hospital Pharmacy*, which is designed to guide pharmacy leaders in establishing patient-centered services in hospitals and health systems. Bob brings several decades of leadership experience in two academic medical centers both in the service side and the colleges of pharmacy having begun practice as a critical care clinical pharmacist who maintains his board certification.

Bob received his bachelor of science, master of science, and doctor of pharmacy degrees from The Ohio State University, College of Pharmacy. He completed a residency at Grant Hospital. Bob is currently Administrator of Pharmacy at The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center, Assistant Dean for Medical Center Affairs, Vice Chair, and Clinical Associate Professor in the College of Pharmacy.

Bob gives this great advice: *Please do not let hardships in your life change your course; establish the right course, and you will find out that hardships will be easier.*



Dear Young Pharmacist,

*“Lead your way, keep on strong,
moving every day—going further on”*

—Lyrics from *Further On*, Bronze Radio Return, 2013

I hope this letter finds you leading your way, keeping strong, and every day moving further on. This song recently has been buzzing around in my head as I celebrated my 5-year anniversary of my treatment for colon cancer. I feel very lucky to be writing to you now, as I was told that I would only have a 35% chance of being here to do that.

During my chemotherapy, which involved infusions of nauseating medications over two-day periods, I listened to music to distract me. At that time (2008) the Iraq war was in full swing, and two songs served to inspire me: “If You’re Going through Hell” and “Mansions of the Lord.” I somehow lived vicariously through the soldiers in Iraq; I often saw my battle in the chemotherapy chair similar to our military’s door-to-door search missions. My battle was, in some ways, as serious as theirs and when the neuropathy of chemotherapy became so bad that I couldn’t function, I was inspired by the fact they were “going through hell” like I was.

But I vowed (and, yes, I really did) to focus on three things if I survived my cancer: being a better family person, putting patients first, and living in the present moment while moving “further on.”

Please don’t let hardships in your life change your course; establish the right course, and you will find out that hardships will be easier. I hope that makes sense! After a brief discussion about experiences, I will finish with a story that I hope will make a difference for you.

I always thought of myself as a loyal and devoted person—especially when it came to my family. My parents were a very stable couple—my dad a World War II veteran, engineer and my mom a nurse. My wife, Barbara, is a strong person from another stable, hard-working farming family from central Ohio. The examples we had as spouses and parents were from a time that was not so complicated; technology did not influence us, kids seemed to grow up at a normal pace, and careers