

Sara J. White



Planning for the Future

Everyone needs a “Sara” in their life! In a very nonjudgmental manner, Sara wants only the best for you. She takes time to understand you and your vision for your career and life, and helps you along the journey to your vision. Her title may be mentor, coach, or friend, but she is always there to support you during the difficult times along the journey and to congratulate you during the good times. In her letter, Sara discusses a portion of life’s journey that everyone should plan for—retirement.

Sara currently serves as a faculty member of the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP) Foundation’s Leadership Academy and a member of the Board of Directors of Omnicell, Inc. Formerly, she served as the Director of Pharmacy at Stanford Hospital and Clinics.

Sara received her bachelor of science degree from Oregon State University and her master of science degree from The Ohio State University, where she also completed her residency. She has served the profession of pharmacy in many leadership positions including President of ASHP. She has been honored as a recipient of many awards including the ASHP Distinguished Leadership Award and the Harvey AK Whitney Award, ASHP’s highest award for health-system pharmacy.

Here Sara tells us: *there is no “right way” for a career to evolve, and it is never too early to start planning for the future.*



Dear Young Pharmacist,

You are a unique and special person. There is not another pharmacist alive today with your specific characteristics and potential, and I am happy to share with you my almost 50 years of pharmacy experience. Of course, there are many things I could share with you, but I choose to focus on one you probably have given only fleeting thought—your retirement. It is common to worry about it later; however, if you are like me, you will all too quickly turn around and find yourself at this phase of your life/career. I speak from my experience of being retired almost 10 years but still remaining very active in pharmacy. I want to focus on what you need to do now and what you should track as your career evolves.

No matter what your age, you need to think seriously about the financial aspects of your retirement. Do not be naive and think you can deal with it later. If you retire at 65 to 70 years old, you probably will live at least two to three decades more, and I doubt that you will be able to live on only your Social Security benefits (if it is still solvent). The key to having the money to do what you would like to in retirement, such as foreign travel, hobbies, visiting grandchildren, etc., is to start now maximizing your employer's retirement plan by contributing the maximum allowable including any voluntary plans or open up IRA accounts. Your contributions will reduce your annual taxable income, and the compounding interest over your 30- to 40-year career will add up to significant money. When evaluating a new position, review the benefit plan with regard to the employer's retirement contribution in addition to what you can contribute. After a career spanning several decades, you will benefit from that additional money.

The challenge of retirement is consciously sorting out how to spend your time. When you are working, you long for the freedom that retirement is perceived to bring. As your career evolves, be sure you stay active physically so you keep from slowly gaining weight, which we all know is easier said than done. You need to follow healthy life habits to try to avoid poor health that will restrict what you can do in retirement. During your working career, it is normal to put some of your interests on the "back burner" because there are not enough