



*Jennifer (Jen) L. Austin,
PharmD*

Planning and Opening a New Hospital Pharmacy and Having Broad-Based Impact

Jen shares how the skills she learned in the Pharmacy Leadership Academy have been a game changer, moving her into a director position at a new facility and creating the pharmacy department and services from the ground up. The senior leadership made it clear that everyone would be required to perform in different roles and break down the traditional departmental silos, which were challenges she found both stimulating and fun.

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Jen's advice to young pharmacists who are considering a leadership position is: ***Through development of new leadership skills and organizational awareness, it is possible to help many more patients than you ever could as an individual practitioner.***



Dear Young Pharmacist,

Congratulations on your accomplishments! Through your curiosity, perseverance, and resilience, you are now a part of our wonderful profession. These important traits will lead you to more opportunities than you can imagine. Even though I am still in the midst of my own personal and professional development, I hope to share some thoughts and experiences I've had that may help as you begin your journey.

I will start this conversation by recognizing and thanking my loving, supportive family and the many mentors, sponsors, and dear friends I've had at every stage of my career. These relationships have been vital to my development, and I am paying this forward through supporting others as they move through their careers. I will always be grateful for those who have taken a chance on me at pivotal transition points and the wonderful teams I have been honored to work with and learn from so far. With this, my first suggestion is to ***take the time throughout your career to make connections, serve others, and seek out guidance from a broad circle of people you trust.*** These relationships and experiences will bring meaning to your days well beyond any accolades you receive for individual accomplishments. In times of challenge, it will also help you keep a fresh perspective and enable you (or have others there to remind you) to see things beyond your immediate circumstances.

Today, I am the Pharmacy Manager in a mid-size community hospital within a large health system. This is not at all what I had originally planned, but it is in line with my passion to improve patient care through pharmacy practice. During pharmacy school, the variety of practice settings and opportunities available to pharmacists continually surprised me. Ultimately, I was drawn toward inpatient clinical practice and decided to pursue a pharmacy practice residency that prepared me well for my first job as a clinical pharmacist. This training also provided exposure to pharmacy operations across the continuum of care, administrative projects, and committee experiences. They became the foundation for my eventual shift in interest to patient care contributions on a broader scale through leadership roles. When a position opened up on our leadership team a few years later, I knew I did not have the formal training or experience to apply but asked for additional projects during the interim period. This soon led to an Operations Coordinator position and eventually a role as Manager. Initially, I was torn over possibly losing the clinical knowledge I had worked so hard to learn, but I realized that I would not lose my understanding of what pharmacists are capable of bringing to patient care and the value of a strong clinical practice. Through development of new leadership skills and organizational awareness, I could help others help many more patients than I ever could as an individual practitioner.

Locally and through professional organizations, I had many great leaders to learn from during these transitions. I took advantage of numerous leadership-based continuing education programs and also benefitted from my employer's leadership training programs. Although they were all helpful, I wanted more formalized pharmacy-focused leadership training; however, pausing my career for a practice management residency or going back to school were not reasonable options for me.