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Selecting the Right Residencies for a Dual Pharmacist Couple and Creating the Learning Experiences You Want

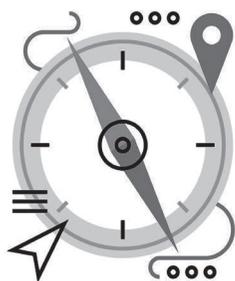
Chelsea is creative, adaptable, compassionate, determined, and passionate about our profession. She outlines how she selected pharmacy, health-system practice, and residency training. As a little “I” leader, she has worked to start and lead a new service for ambulatory oncology patients.

Chelsea is currently an Outpatient Oncology Clinical Pharmacist at Northwestern Medicine–Downtown Campus, Chicago, Illinois. She completed an accredited postgraduate year 1 (PGY1) pharmacy practice residency and an accredited PGY2 hematology/oncology pharmacy residency at Northwestern Memorial Hospital, having received her PharmD from Purdue University, College of Pharmacy, West Lafayette, Indiana.

Chelsea’s advice is: ***Love what you do, immerse yourself in what you are learning, and through your experiences, decide who you want to become as a pharmacist.***

Dear Pharmacy Colleague,

When I was in pharmacy school, I thought of the stereotypical pharmacist as a type A person who knew exactly where (s)he would be and what (s)he would be doing in 10



years, and I also knew that description did not fit me. I think that there are far more pharmacists out there like me who do not know exactly what they want to do far in advance, and sometimes not even until they are already doing it, but fall in love with their career and choices as they make them. My story is one of loving what I do, immersing myself in what I am learning, and allowing myself to decide who I wanted to become as a pharmacist through my experiences.

I am the first person in my family to become a pharmacist or work in healthcare. When I was in high school, my best friend Kristyn knew exactly what she wanted to do—be a pharmacist. I had a much foggier view of my future self, but her desire and clarity about her decision made me want to find out why she wanted it so badly, so I looked into it. I shadowed a community pharmacist and saw his compassion for his patients and how his patients loved their pharmacist. After seeing that relationship, I became interested in pharmacy, too. I looked into college programs and decided to go to Purdue. I wanted a career helping others, but I did not know until I submitted my application and chose pre-pharmacy if that would be as a pharmacist or a math teacher. After 2 years of pre-pharmacy courses, I knew what I wanted and applied to Purdue's pharmacy school.

I honestly did not know anything about health-system pharmacy until I heard some of my professors talk about it. Residency was discussed all the time, but I hadn't really thought about it until I went to Kenya for two months for an advanced pharmacy practice experience (APPE) rotation and practiced in a hospital there. It was my first rotation, and I learned a lot about myself and who I was as a pharmacist. I gained a deeper understanding of the impact that a pharmacist could have by advocating for their patients and learned that I could do the same. After returning to the states, I decided to pursue residency.

I loved the environment that residency-trained pharmacists, preceptors, and residency-bound students created at ASHP's Midyear Clinical Meeting. I applied and interviewed with several PGY1 programs. I still remember walking out of the interview at Northwestern, thinking "this is it." I could feel the passion that everyone at Northwestern had for their patients and for being a pharmacist. Northwestern was where I wanted to be and where I felt like I belonged.

I met my husband, Joe, at Purdue in pharmacy school. He is my favorite person and biggest supporter. He is also, as you probably figured out, a pharmacist. Because we were in the same field, it was often easier for us to understand what the other was going through, but it also made the search for PGY1 and PGY2 quite a bit more complicated. For PGY1, we decided that we would focus on two cities, Chicago and Indianapolis, and from there, we would work with whatever hand was dealt to us. There was a chance we would be in two different cities, but we accepted that and decided not to do the couples match so that we could do what we each thought was best for our careers. Residency was only a year, and we knew that our relationship could withstand distance as we both advanced our careers in a way that only residency could.

I matched with Northwestern for PGY1 and was so excited! Fortunately, Joe also matched in Chicago so we moved there together. I started training and soon it was time to pick my rotations. We had a fantasy football-like draft to pick our rotations, which was great because it meant that I had a say in what my year would look like. Late