

Andre D. Harvin *PharmD, MS, BCPS*



Follow Your Passions—Random Personal Encounters Provide Career Guidance

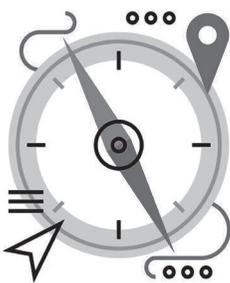
Andre reflects on a series of life-long personal encounters that have been pivotal to his professional life and his career advancement. He illustrates how various events over the years have influenced his career directions and how he still relies on such opportunities to shape his goals.

Andre is currently Pharmacy Branch Manager at OptumRx, Kernersville, North Carolina after recently serving as a Pharmacy System Manager of Inpatient Operations at Wake Forest Baptist Health in Winston Salem, North Carolina. He received a BS degree in Biochemistry from the University of Maryland, his PharmD from the University of Michigan, and completed a postgraduate year 1 (PGY1)/PGY2/MS health-system pharmacy administration residency and graduate degree program at The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center in Columbus.

Andre's advice is: ***Listen to others' advice and follow your goals with perseverance; realize opportunities are often unexpected but should always be considered; hesitancy and self-doubt are expected; and continue to reassess your own "best self."***

Dear Pharmacy Colleague,

During the first year of my first position after my residency, I was eager to impress my boss. I worked ridiculous hours, took on every project possible, and never took a day off. I maintained this pace for the nearly a year before a sales representative who was visiting our facility gave me some advice. He warned me about burnout and told me my current path would lead to a career-limiting decision before I knew it. I realized his advice was a wake-up call; I began to aggressively manage expectations to ensure I could deliver the quality of work I was capable of with my resources.



His advice reminds me of other career-altering encounters that have brought me to this stage of my life.

CAREER-ALTERING ENCOUNTERS

My first such encounter came along before I even knew what a pharmacist did. I was born in Baltimore, Maryland to a single-parent mother doing her best with limited resources. We didn't have much, but what we had we cherished. When I was in middle school, she read *Gifted Hands* by Ben Carson to me. The book changed my life as it was the first time a person who looked like me was notable for his intellect rather than his athletic ability or comedic timing. My admiration for Dr. Carson only grew over time as I saw a reflection of my own life in his experiences. If he could go from nearly living on the streets to being one of the greatest neurosurgeons in the world, what could I achieve with a similar mindset?

Years later, I had the opportunity to meet Dr. Carson in person. I asked him how he accomplished so much with so many barriers in his life. His response was to highlight a quote in his book:

“Success is determined not by whether or not you face obstacles, but by your reaction to them. And if you look at these obstacles as a containing fence, they become your excuse for failure. If you look at them as a hurdle, each one strengthens you for the next.”

It was a simple response, but it meant so much to me to have that interaction. What I learned from Dr. Carson is how to define one of the most important traits of a leader: **perseverance**. Anyone who has ever spent time with me and asked me about my leadership philosophy would admit that perseverance comes up multiple times. As a leader, obstacles are a guarantee; the best leaders I know face each obstacle directly and, whether they succeed or fail, they always learn from it. Having been a pharmacist for only four years at the writing of this letter, I have lost count of the number of obstacles that I have faced both personally and professionally. I would love to say that I handled each with poise but that would be a falsehood. I have tripped, stumbled, and fallen more times than I can count; after each obstacle, I collect myself, reflect, and prepare for the next one.

My next encounter came during a pivotal time in my life and lasted only a few minutes. I was approaching my senior year in undergraduate school when I desperately wondered where I was going in life. My first two years in college were marred with underachievement and frustration. Despite my rededication to my studies and improved academic performance over the following two years, my GPA was far from competitive. At the moment when I was deciding whether or not to apply to pharmacy school, fate would intervene with a chance encounter. It was Thanksgiving evening. Instead of resting on the couch with family, I was in line at the mall hoping to be one of