

## Carolyn A. Magee PharmD

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### *Early Planning Sets Your Career Course*

Carolyn initially assumed she would be a community pharmacist. However, all that changed when she experienced a critical care advanced pharmacy practice experience (APPE) PharmD rotation. From this insightful experience, she set her career goals to pursue a postgraduate year 1 (PGY1) and PGY2 residency in this clinical direction. She then methodically planned her steps for a successful residency and career.

Carolyn is currently the Medical Surgical Intensive Care Unit (ICU) Clinical Pharmacy Specialist at the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC). She received her Bachelor of Science in Pharmaceutical Studies from the University of Kansas and her PharmD from the University of Kansas School of Pharmacy. Carolyn completed her PGY1 pharmacy residency and PGY2 critical care pharmacy residency at University of Kentucky HealthCare, Lexington.

Carolyn's advice is: ***Utilize seven tips for early career decision making: pursue your passion, make a list of non-negotiables, follow your gut, pick what is right for you, find a support system, find a mentor you trust, and get involved.***

### *Dear Pharmacy Colleague,*

The beginning of your career is full of questions and decisions. Do you want to do a residency and, if so, where? Do you then want to follow with a PGY2 residency? Should you early commit to the subsequent residency? How are you going to manage the stress of residency? What kind of career do you want to pursue after residency? Where do you want to look for potential positions? What is most important to you early in your career? How are you going to set yourself on the right path? Although I cannot answer all of these questions for you, I want to share what helped me make some of these decisions.



When I started pharmacy school, I had no idea that pharmacists worked in hospitals. As an undergraduate, I took a job at a retail pharmacy and decided that was what I wanted to do with my life. However, when I completed the critical care didactic module in our last semester of pharmacy school, I found myself so engaged in the curriculum and so fascinated by the complexities involved in the care of critically ill patients that I began to see this specialty as a potential career path. My passion continued to develop on my APPE rotations. My very first rotation was in a medical intensive care unit (ICU) and I loved every second of it. Each patient was sick yet uniquely different from the patient in the next room. Although I had begun exploring the idea of residency in my last two years of pharmacy school, it was then that I ultimately decided I wanted to do a residency. This leads me to my **rule #1** for making early career decisions: ***Pursue your passion.***

Finding the residency you want can be stressful. The number of options to choose from was overwhelming. I did not know how to even begin narrowing my selections. A mentor advised: ***make a list of non-negotiables***, which became my **rule #2** for early career decision making. *Are you geographically limited? Are you interested in a certain specialty? Do you want a heavy emphasis in teaching? Do you want a big or small program?* For me, that meant finding programs that offered PGY2s in solid organ transplant and critical care, my two interests at the time. I pursued PGY1 residencies that had experts in these specialty areas, an affiliation with a college of pharmacy to allow for teaching opportunities, and a program that stressed learning how to be an independent clinician. My *non-negotiables* may be totally different than yours, and that is OK! This list is meant to be individualized to your specific needs. I started with a list of all of the programs that also had PGY2s in my desired specialties and weaned the number down by using my non-negotiables. The ASHP Clinical Midyear Meeting helps you further investigate the programs on your list. I prioritized speaking with the residents from those programs because they were in the shoes that I was soon to fill. I wanted to ensure they were getting the residency experience they wanted and were happy with their decision.

I remember stressing over residency applications and worrying about not getting interviews. This led me to over-applying. I ended up interviewing at 11 programs, which was entirely too many. This led to a stressful month full of interviews. I spent the entire month of February in hotel rooms and on planes and was completely exhausted. I also feel like I ended up interviewing at programs that did not fully meet my list of non-negotiables. Looking back, I wish I would have been a little more selective—it would have eliminated undue stress. Then it came time to rank programs. I separated the programs into my top picks, programs I would be happy with, and then those that I did not feel would give me the experience I wanted. I chose not to rank the programs in that last category. My top three programs were a tie in my mind; they all met my