VIEWPOINT

Leaders or Managers for Difficult Times

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INTRODUCTION

The past decades have been tumultuous for pharmacy and pharmacists. Ethical lapses have been much too commonplace and have included:

- diversion of medication samples and illegal reselling of such by pharmacists
- importation and distribution of counterfeit medications
- outdated drugs (prescription and over-the-counter (OTC)), infant formula sold in pharmacies
- scourge of disreputable online pharmacies
- Medicaid and Medicare fraud
- violation and compromising of the North American Licensure Examination (NAPLEX) in Georgia
- continuing illegal selling of non-narcotic and narcotic controlled substances
- cheating of various varieties

Health care system impacts with great importance for pharmacy and academia include:

- implementation of the Medicare Drug Discount Card in 2004 followed by the rollout of Medicare Part D in 2006 and beyond
- the payment opportunities for medication therapy management services for pharmacy and other providers
- continued erosion of pharmacy profitability, especially so during the current economic downturn
- decreasing margins within third party payment plans
- dramatic increases in the number of outpatient prescriptions
- \$4.00 generic prescription surge and availability
- continuing consolidation of health-system pharmacy services yet continuing recognition of the importance of pharmacy services within health-care institutions

- proliferation of new schools and colleges of pharmacy during the present financial and economic crisis
- continued shortage of pharmacists
- new calls for reimportation of prescription drugs to lessen drug expenditures from within the newly elected administration.

Are these lists presented above just lists, or are they opportunities for leadership within pharmacy to address the changes these impacts present? Do these challenges (opportunities) call for pharmacy leadership within us all? Within us all can mean individually or collectively. In effect, we all must assume some degree of leadership. Leaders are not only among us in pharmacy, the opportunity for leadership rests within each of us in pharmacy.

The focus of the leadership may vary, but each of us needs to be a leader. Leaders are not born as leaders. Leadership skills must be brought forward from within us to address challenges that will be with us throughout our careers. Leaders can address minor or major challenges daily, and there are some among us who are called to lead in major capacities. We give thanks for them in these times of uncertainty.

Leadership and Management

Numerous authors have written of the difference between management concepts and leadership traits. Kotter's view of leadership involves strategic thinking, precise communication skills, and repetitive reinforcement of the leader's need to involve others in the organization for optimal success.¹ Regarding management, Kotter notes: "Management is a set of processes that can keep a complicated system of people and technology running smoothly."^{1[p25]} Management segments include: budgeting, planning, organizing, staffing, problem solving. Kotter also suggests that leading and managing need to be complimentary.²

Leaders need to be good managers, but a manager is not necessarily a leader. Why the distinction? Leaders need to provide a vision for those surrounding them so as to move the enterprise forward. This might be a group within your school or college, a research group, a department or division, the classroom, or a practice site. Some

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who do not at present aspire to be leaders will progress to leadership positions within academia and beyond.

In each of these above positions of authority, leaders will follow the goals and objectives of the specific school or association, but individual leaders will necessarily impart a sense of direction for the future. It is up to the individuals as leaders to inspire, motivate, and move others to help move the affected entity in the right direction. Managers may be able to coordinate day-to-day activities, maintain a sound financial base for the school or college, and help guide the activities of others. However, it will be the leader that will enable the school to move forward and be successful. Our schools and colleges can function day to day with managers after a fashion, but it takes leaders to truly make them successful.

Recognizing Strengths and Weaknesses

Former American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy President Robert Smith noted: "We are all bundles of strengths and weaknesses."^{3[p433]} The key is not that we might have weaknesses or strengths, but that we avoid blind spots to what might hinder our own success and our own self-evaluation, or our evaluation of the worth or potential of others. Leaders realize what they can and cannot do, see the potential of others despite flaws, and proceed to allow the best to come out of themselves and others to make progress and achieve success. We work and practice daily as teachers, administrators, and researchers with many who do not have the benefits that we have. They are just as important as any of us. Individuals we depend upon may not be as smart, efficient, articulate, or savvy as perhaps we are. However, our success and that of those with whom we work most closely is largely dependent upon many such individuals. More often than not what we are able to achieve in our careers is based on what we can accomplish with others who report to us or work with us. In effect, we cannot achieve much of anything without the support and supportive work of many others.

Who Gets Credit – A Leader's Perspective?

The lack of a need to gain personal credit for what the group accomplishes is a difficult task for leaders. This will often entail bringing many voices that are competing to be heard—sometimes vehemently—into a consensus to move ahead. There are many texts and treatises describing leadership. One commonality of them all is recognizing the need for leaders to be less worried about who gets credit for successes and more concerned about helping success happen through empowering leadership in others. Taking credit for the work of others is not an estimable trait for leaders to grasp.⁴

Leading

Kotter speaks of leadership as such: "Leadership defines what the future looks like."^{1[p25]} Souba⁵ has noted the shifting view of leadership with a new view:

- (1) People create together by collaborating, dialoging, and sharing research.
- (2) Ownership of many in the success of an organization. (As noted above, one of the most difficult challenges for a leader is to adopt the mindset that it is not important to always take credit for successes as they occur.)
- (3) Mobilizing people to confront reality and working to mollify entrenched beliefs.
- (4) Looking at leadership as a series of activities that are not ethereal but are measurable.

Souba suggests leadership is a risky business^{5[p8]} and it takes effort to exercise leadership requiring generosity (thus the phrase - exercising leadership).^{5[9]} Leaders above all else must be innovators (thus the phrase *creating leadership*).

Leadership From and Within Pharmacy Organizations

Meadows, Maine, and colleagues conducted a study of pharmacists' views of the important skills, knowledge, and abilities necessary for leaders in the future.⁶ In a Delphi questionnaire study to identify skills, knowledge, and abilities (SKAs) that are viewed as most important to navigate challenges for pharmacy in the future, Meadows et al found the following to be the 4 highest ranked SKAs:

- Ability to see the big picture
- Ability to demonstrate the value of pharmacy services
- Ability to lead and manage ethically
- Skills for influencing and organization's senior leadership.

Our pharmacy organizations have never needed leadership and leaders dealing with uncertain change as they do now. This Association is most fortunate to have skillful leaders at our helm at this dramatic point in history.

Our Current Needs

No one can predict what the future holds for the academy. Will new programs be deferred for implementation later? Will our advanced practice and introductory practice sites be diminished in numbers as a result of budgetary insufficiencies, bankruptcies, or mergers? Will current and/or planned schools and colleges within

our academia survive the economic downturn? Current scenarios and projections are not pleasant to contemplate. There have been dramatic cuts in budgets, funds required to be returned to central coffers, freezes on hiring (staff, faculty, teaching assistants), and forecasts for more cuts in budgets yet to come. Individuals possessing management skills with extraordinary leadership abilities must come from within and among us if academic pharmacy is to survive and thrive in very troubling and challenging times.

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