

# Middle Easterners Minority Project

by Youssef Roman, PharmD 2012 candidate

November, 29, 2009 and April 18, 2010 marked the first and second healthcare outreaches for the Middle Easterners at churches in Portland, Oregon. Both events included educational presentations on diabetes and blood pressure. In the presentations the etiology, prognosis, and possible pharmacological treatments that pertained to each disease state were discussed. The presentations also included non-pharmacological treatments and lifestyles modifications to prevent and control each disease state. A total of 65 persons attended the educational sessions that were presented in the Arabic language. The presentations lasted from 30-45 minutes each and involved question and answer sessions. During the presentations, the importance and means of controlling blood glucose and blood pressure were presented in the context of the long-term complications of uncontrolled blood glucose and blood pressure. Each presentation ended with an emphasis on prevention and healthy habits to reduce the risk of developing diabetes or hypertension.

Following each PowerPoint presentation, the congregation was dismissed for healthcare screening

of blood pressure and blood glucose by pharmacy students from Oregon State University. The outreaches also provided educational and informational materials on various topics (e.g. blood pressure 101, DASH program, and diabetes facts) in English and Arabic.

Samples of different over the counter medications were also available to patients. These included calcium with vitamin D, omeprazole, lip balm, herbal medicine (e.g., Echinacea, ginger), acetaminophen and aspirin, along with drug dispensers. During each session, there was also a section for private counseling and simple physical assessment.

The timing of first outreach coincided with the outbreak of H1N1 influenza. Therefore, it was very helpful for the congregation to learn some facts about differences between viral and bacterial infections, signs and symptoms of H1N1, complications of H1N1, the release of the vaccine, the number of doses needed for full immunizations, qualifications for the vaccines, and basic hygiene to prevent transmission. Informational sheets in Arabic from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) were provided to help raise public awareness about the H1N1 pandemic.

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## About the Author



Youssef Roman was born and raised in a Christian home in Cairo, Egypt. In 2003, he immigrated to the United States. Prior to arriving in the US, he started into pharmacy school but was unable to complete his education. Today, he is a third year pharmacy student at Oregon State University. His goal after graduation is to be in pharmacy education. In his spare time he enjoys soccer tennis, hiking, kayaking, and travel. Mr Roman is a recipient of a CPFI Student Scholarship for the project described in this article.

## Middle Easterners Minority Project (continued)

During the first outreach, 28 individuals ranging from 18 to 65 years of age were screened and counseled. Screenings primarily included measuring blood pressure and heart rate. Results from the screening showed a trend of an elevated blood pressure and heart rate among the participants. In addition to screening, counseling on hypertension medications and medications side effects was offered. During counseling sessions, many patients informed us that they never checked their blood pressure, with their first blood pressure check occurring during this outreach.

In the second outreach served a total of 37 people from ages 21 to 71 years old who were seen at screening stations during a thorough screening session. For example, the diabetes station screened 15 patients for random blood glucose. The range of blood glucose measurements was 83-145 mg/dl with an ADA risk score ranging from 1-16.

On the other hand, the blood pressure station screened 18 patients. Measures of blood pressure were categorized as normal, pre-hypertension, and stage I hypertension. Only five patients had normal blood pressure in this range, and they were mainly women age 25-49 years. There were 11 patients with pre-hypertension, and these were mostly men age 23-71 years. Two men had had stage I hypertension, and they were 60 and 67 years old.

Free samples along with counseling on maximum dose and drug interactions were provided at the OTC station. In the physical assessment section,

two patients with symptoms consistent with carpal tunnel and sinusitis were identified. One patient was immediately referred to a physician due to a suspected hepatic disease.

Diabetes and hypertension are common in many countries of the Middle East, due to various reasons including nutrition and lifestyle. The typical Middle Eastern diet is high in salt and red meat. A Middle Eastern lifestyle tends to be sedentary increasing the risk for developing diabetes and hypertension. In the individuals we screened most were in the pre-hypertension category which is more easily managed by basic lifestyles and dietary changes.

The opportunity to serve the Middle Easterners minority had a great impact on my personal understanding of the common diseases in the Portland community. Feedback from the participants and event organizers was extremely positive. The outreaches targeting the Middle Eastern community enabled individuals to care for their health and better manage their diseases. It was also a great opportunity for many of my classmates to get cross-cultural exposure and deal with non-traditional patients. On the personal level, I hope the minority project would engage the entire pharmacy school and become such a The Healthy Minority 2012 project. Adoption and endorsement of this project by CPFI greatly impacted the health of the minorities in the Portland area and the State of Oregon.

## The Parable of Listening

Christians are instructed to “excel in everything – in faith, in speech, and in knowledge” (2 Corinthians 8:7). Practicing that excellence in my study of pharmacy ultimately presented me an invaluable opportunity. As valedictorian of my Doctor of Pharmacy class, I was asked to speak at the public university’s pharmacy commencement ceremony, to a captive audience of over 500 students, parents, and faculty. The Lord allows our careers, even while still students, as a platform for our profession.

Yet, I was not immune to the consequences of speaking publicly about Faith in Christ. My high school valedictory, which stressed the importance of our Nation’s founding Faith and the dangers of moral relativism, met strong resistance and outright threat I would not speak at graduation. Despite school officials’ reservations and historical disclaimer printed in the commencement program, the speech garnered front-page newspaper and local radio station attention, as well as a salute from then-Governor John G. Rowland at the State Republican Convention. So, when the Lord set the stage a second time, I was prepared to speak, without hesitation.

As Jesus commands, “Let your light shine before men...that they may praise your Father in Heaven” (Matthew 5:14-16). After the ceremony, the speech received an administrator’s accolade as, “one of the best I have heard;” yet, it was the significant number of positive responses to the message that was overwhelming. A parent shared his joy someone “had the courage” to profess the Lord, a fellow student shared with me his same Faith in Christ, and an administrator’s daughter humbly commented, “You made my mother cry.” Dozens of others commented in passing, before the day was through, of being moved to tears, especially concerning the story of the Doctor’s car. Even one week later, I received word from a classmate her family was still talking about that single story! It is my hope it impacts you, the reader, just as well.

All pharmacists have a duty to serve. Yet, as Christian pharmacists, we have Divine appointment to serve as Christ to those around us. We must strive for excellence in everything we do and “always be prepared...to give the reason for the hope” that we have (1 Peter 3:15), and when the Lord shines the spotlight...Stand in it!

# “He That Has Ears To Hear, Let Him Hear”

## Valedictory Address, May 10, 2008

### University of Connecticut Doctor of Pharmacy Ceremony

Noticing no one to assist her, the woman shouted into the pharmacy,

“HELLO! CAN SOMEBODY HELP ME?”

Hidden behind the counter, stood the pharmacist deep in concentration working on an important prescription. “Just one moment,” the pharmacist assured her.

“HELLO! CAN SOMEBODY HELP ME?”

Perhaps she didn’t hear me, thought the pharmacist. Almost done and not wanting to have to start over again, “Just one second!”

Like any other persistent customer –

“HELLO! CAN SOMEBODY HELP ME?”

Dropping everything, the pharmacist took two steps to the right, and asked politely with a smile, “May I help you?”

“Oh, Hello, Can you help me? Where can I find batteries for my hearing aid?”

I must cite that true story to University of Connecticut School of Pharmacy alumna, my sister.

Today we honor: honor. With our final achievement today, we bring honor and pride to our school, our professors, to our parents and families. As well, today we are honored to earn and receive our Doctorate!

Never forget this day and the Pride with it.

When asked to say a few words today, of course I was personally honored. There was just one problem. We are so diversified – there were not many experiences equally shared by us all that I could expound upon; none except for one:

SIX L-O-O-O-O-O-N-N-N-N-G YEARS.

Let me elaborate:

SIX-L-O-O-O-O-O-N-N-N-N-G-YEARS-WITH- OUR DEAN!!

Have been wonderful!!

On behalf of the Class of 2008, we thank you, Dean, the professors and staff, for your professional dedication. It is an honor to join the ranks of University of Connecticut School of Pharmacy alumni.

However, not to disappoint our Associate Dean, who asked me to reflect on our time at the School of Pharmacy, let me share these few memories:

Therapeutics, exams, Bio-Organic Chemistry, barely passing...exams, Hewitt Room 350, exams, the ACE Inhibitor cough demonstration and questions about niacin...on our exams, studying and exams, and as we leave here today: the NAPLEX and law... more exams!!

That being said – the past is the past. It’s on to the future.

As pharmacists, we each have a source from which we will draw our motivation and strength; it may be a belief in yourself, a mentor, family, friends, or all of the above. Personally, for those of you who’ve known me well over these past six years, you know of my additional study of psychology, as well as my study of a book available at the Co-op; however, not required reading. It is written in my opinion by the greatest physician who has even walked the face of the earth, and it contains timeless truths still practiced today, even in medicine, throughout the world.

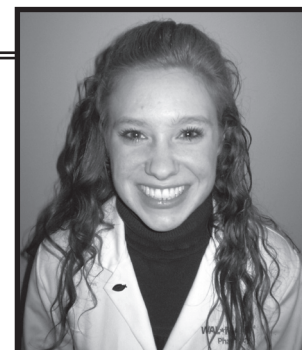
“To whom much is given, much is required,” [Matthew 25:29] is one truth. How great is your potential:

1. In a single year, as a small retail pharmacist, you will serve in numbers greater than the 70,000 attending this year’s Super Bowl;
2. In ten years, you will serve a number greater than the population of a major city;
3. In a lifetime, that number could very well exceed the population of some U.S. states;
4. Furthermore, your work in research has an immense capability to serve mankind in numbers exceeding the population of some countries, or, if you prefer, far surpassing the sales of a rock star.

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### About the Author

Kristen L. Rychalsky, PharmD was valedictorian of the 2008 Doctor of Pharmacy graduating class at the University of Connecticut, School of Pharmacy. At the same time she received a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology degree, graduating Summa Cum Laude and as an Honors Scholar. Currently, Dr Rychalsky is a staff pharmacist for Wal-Mart Pharmacy, and is looking to pursue a clinical residency in the near future.



## He That Has Ears To Hear, Let Him Hear... (continued)

Take a bow! In no simpler terms, today you have each been granted the potential to perform: MIRACLES.

Today, we each begin to walk the path of greatness – as many have before us. Everything you hear today is good – stay active, seek higher levels of education, strive to attain achievements that at this moment you can only dream about, and by all means – make your university proud.

In so doing, we now enter into a new classroom, a new school, and a stage set for even greater success, as portrayed in this next true account.

For this doctor, this day would be like no other in his medical career – the reward and thrill of driving off the dealership lot in his hard-earned, brand-new, sparkling convertible sports car – a true symbol of his many years of hard work building a successful practice. And like you or I, he couldn't help and didn't hesitate to drive it up and down side streets with a pizzazz for attention and turning heads.

He earned it! Wouldn't you agree?

Slowing down to a stop sign, it happened – a loud BASH! Jumping out and running to the passenger side he found a huge gash in the door. Beneath it – a brick, and there standing behind the parked cars was a nine-year-old boy, frightened to tears. You can imagine the look of shock and anger on the doctor's face. The boy blurted, "I've been standing here and shouting for a long time. No one would stop!" he said as he pointed further up the sidewalk. There lying on the ground was his thirteen-year-old brother, who after both having gone for a stroll of fresh air, had slipped out of his wheelchair and was too heavy to pick up. As the doctor's eyes came back and rested on him, the boy asked,

"Can you help me?"

But, this is where the story only begins. That doctor chose never to repair the dent in his car, as a daily humbling reminder to himself and to anyone who would ask, of the true purpose in his calling, and to tell his story, which I pass on to you: a battle medal of humility, pinned on to the uniform called pride – the same one we wear today.

"He among you who wishes to be Great, must become the servant" [Matthew 20:26] – another "timeless truth."

Today we've arrived. My challenge to you: Look up. There's another flight of stairs. For as you already know,

just as there isn't a ski-lift to the top of Mt. Everest, unfortunately, there isn't an express elevator to the next level of success.

Go for it – but always remember, Humility has a humbling way of saying, "Hello."

In all honesty, didn't you for a moment say to yourself, I went to school for six-LONG-years, just to direct someone to batteries? Didn't you too feel the pain when you thought, "AUGH, My BRAND-NEW CAR!?!"

Imagine now, just for this brief moment, total loss of hearing; total loss of use of both legs. It is a privilege to be called doctor. Today we honor: honor.

One final true story I experienced first hand, while a student and intern:

Leaving upset and without her prescription, this woman returned later, wishing to speak to the pharmacist. Here's what she didn't say:

She didn't commend the pharmacist on her degree, education, or awards.

She didn't thank her for the cost savings of substituting a generic for the brand name drug; or for filling the brand instead of the generic.

She didn't comment on the service, the timely manner in which the prescription was filled, or meeting the corporation's weekly sales quota.

No, none of these.

The woman specifically returned to express her gratitude, in thanking the pharmacist for, as she put it, "caring enough to keep asking questions." "My doctor told me," she emphasized, and I quote, "If I took this medication, I could have died."

Often we hear, "If you could look into your future, what would you see?"

I believe if the future could speak to us today, it just might say, "Hello?! Can somebody help me?"

To my fellow Doctors, Congratulations! Today is a Great Day! Tomorrow is what you make it! I will miss you all. I wish upon you this Blessing by the Great Physician, my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ:

May the Lord Bless you and Keep you. May He cause His Face to Shine upon you and be Gracious unto you. May He lift up His Countenance upon you and Grant you His Peace.

And from this day on, always remember – wherever you go, or wherever you work, make sure you definitely know where to find the hearing aid batteries!

Thank you and God Bless.