

Pharmacy Practice: Who Benefits?

by Frank J. Nice



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Dr. Frank J. Nice has practiced as a consultant, lecturer, and author on medications and breastfeeding for 40 years. He holds a Bachelor's Degree in Pharmacy, a Masters Degree in Pharmacy Administration, and Masters and Doctorate Degrees in Public Administration. Dr. Nice holds Certification in Public Health Pharmacy and is registered as a pharmacist in Pennsylvania, Maine, Arizona, and Maryland. He practiced at the NIH for 30 years and currently serves as a pharmacist and project manager at the FDA. At the NIH he served for 20 years as Assistant Program Director for the Clinical Neurosciences Program. After 30 years of service as a Commissioned Officer and pharmacist with the United States Public Health Service he retired with distinguished service.

Over three dozen peer-reviewed articles on the use of prescription medications, over-the-counter products, and herbals during breastfeeding have been written by Dr. Nice. In addition, he authored articles and book chapters on the use of power, epilepsy, and work characteristics of health care professionals.

Dr. Nice has organized and participated in over a three dozen medical mission teams to the country of Haiti. He continues to provide consultations, lectures, and presentations to the breastfeeding community and to serve the poor of Haiti.

Last year, Dr. Nice was selected by the Temple University School of Pharmacy Alumni Association to receive the 2011 Distinguished Practitioner Award. The award was presented at the White Coat Ceremony in September 2012. The White Coat Ceremony not only welcomes students to the profession of pharmacy, but it instills in them the seriousness and professionalism of a pharmacy career. The following represents the address given to the first year pharmacy students.

Ethics can be defined as the rules of conduct recognized in respect to a particular choice of human actions. In pharmacy practice, we can choose to define who will benefit from our ethical choice of action. There are two obvious answers to the question of who will benefit from our choice. Let us look at two models that answer the question of who benefits from our pharmacy practice:

The “I/You/Me First Model”

Under this model, you, as a pharmacist will certainly benefit materially. You will make a lot of money, a whole lot of money. You will make more money as a pharmacist than most workers in this country. You will also benefit personally and professionally. You will have a great sense of pride as you see people in need respect you

and look up to you. At the same time, you will find pharmacy to be one of the most stressful and frustrating professions you could have ever chosen to practice. You will be beaten down mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. Your pharmacy practice will eventually burn out.

The “Patient First Model”

Under this model, you, as a pharmacist will also benefit materially. You will make a lot of money, but you will end up with a lot less money. I know, because I left a lot of my money in Haiti. In humility, you will benefit personally and professionally because you will respect and look up to people in need. The stress and frustration you will experience in your practice will be put into perspective by the needs of your patients. Your

pharmacy practice will be on fire and not burn out because you will be consumed helping others in need. You will be lifted up mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.

Just how does this all work? In 1995, I went to Haiti with a duffel bag of sample drugs to take to a Haitian church that was twinned with my local church through the Parish Twinning Program of the Americas. When I arrived and saw the bare pharmacy shelves and realized that not one of the 100,000 people living in that area had ever seen a pharmacist or doctor, I had to do more. The next year I organized a team of 5 friends, and we ran a one week clinic in Haiti, treating hundreds of patients. After going to Haiti 14 times over 16 years, we now send up to three or more medical teams to Haiti every February,

June, and October, and other times as necessary. We treat thousands of patients each time, while running outreach and pilot programs to train and help other groups develop their own medical missions. There is an active referral program and free clinic for patients when we are not in Haiti. In addition, medical record system has been developed and the clinic building has been renovated. Schools have been built, children educated, the malnourished fed, water systems constructed and treated, people cured, people's lives saved, and most of all, the Haitian people have received hope.

You see this hope in the eyes of the Haitian people because they know you care enough about them to come to Haiti. You were willing to leave the comfort of your home to come to Haiti. You have put their needs first, even if for only a few weeks of the year. They know you will be back because you really care for them. Their eyes burn into your heart as you look into the Haitians' hearts through their eyes. Those eyes sear your conscience. Each time I come back from Haiti, I come back more fulfilled personally, professionally, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually than when I left for Haiti.

Because of the extreme poverty and lack of almost any infrastructure in Haiti, the only way to improve the overall health of Haiti is to do it one person at a time. Therefore, there is a bonus to practicing the Patient First Model. Society also benefits, because you have made the world a better place for at least one person in need and have given hope where there was none.

There is a verse in the Bible that explains this whole concept of "Who Benefits" from the practice of pharmacy:

"But seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matthew 6:33, KJV)

Let me paraphrase this verse: Seek ye first the welfare of your patients and fulfill their needs, and all the things of the world shall be added unto you. Jesus appears to be dealing with eternal issues that surpass worldly things such as those encountered in Haiti, and one's works do not merit entry into God's Kingdom. Yet, the Patient First Model fits perfectly. By seeking first the welfare of our patients rather than our own, we are seeking the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness, and all the things of the world will be added unto us. I can testify to that.

Pharmacy is one of the best professions that you could choose, if you follow the Patient First Model. You have chosen a great profession and a great pharmacy school to accomplish your goal of pharmacy practice. Start setting your pharmacy practice on fire now. I can tell you this; if I had to do my pharmacy career over again, I would not change a thing. To me personally, pharmacy is not only one of the best professions, it is the best and the greatest. May God bless you in all that you do.

Epilogue: I also have been consulting on breastfeeding and medications for over 35 years. Going to Haiti set my career on fire, and I published my book, "Nonprescription Drugs for the Breastfeeding Mother." This is just one example of what happens when your pharmacy career is not burning out, but on fire. Keep the fire burning and you, too, will see the practice of pharmacy as the best profession you could have ever chosen, both for you and those whom you will serve.