



He shared with me His eyes for His people. He hadn't forgotten either of these babies. He also gave me His heart, which aches over the pain they've endured. If I am a better pharmacist, then I am a better servant to many like them, and I give all the glory to God. In this way, I will follow Jesus' example. He went the extra mile to serve us. "He made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness ...by becoming obedient to death – even death on a cross!" (Philippians 2:7, 8b, NIV)

God's Plan

I see now why God saw fit to plant me in the jungle of Honduras for a month. First, He wanted these patients to have a pharmacy student. He believes in our profession, and He knew the influence for change that even a student could have. All I had to do was say, "Yes, Lord, I'll go." Second, He wanted me to grow. Those two beautiful babies, the three

divine appointments, and every resident of the Colon coastal region were born into a fallen world, wrought with suffering. It was there that God nurtured a desire in my heart to bring relief and freedom to the forgotten corners of the world. If He is at work in these places, I want to join Him. Death, disease, and poverty are already defeated and under the feet of Jesus. We are His ambassadors, bringing His kingdom of eternal life, health and prosperity to the ends of this earth. The mission field, both overseas and on the home front, needs Christian pharmacists, bearers of the Holy Spirit and messengers of the Good News of Jesus Christ crucified for us. With Him before us, beside us, and behind us, we are commissioned and empowered with boldness to serve Him in excellence and to expect great things. "Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen." (Ephesians 3:20-21)

Reference:

1. *The Selection and Use of Essential Medicines - WHO. (2017, March 31). Retrieved January 10, 2018, from http://www.who.int/medicines/publications/essentialmedicines/EML_2017_ExecutiveSummary.pdf?ua=1*

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Paths of Uncertainty by Anna M. Staudt

In the few months prior to graduation from pharmacy school, I faced many uncertainties regarding my path as a soon-to-be pharmacist. What is the right path for me? This question weighed heavily on my heart for months, especially after my plan for residency did not turn out as I thought it would. The burden of anxiety was overwhelming. I remember sitting on the back of my husband's truck at the park with my head in my hands, wondering what my path was supposed to be.

Still feeling rejected and lost, I was leery of the next option presented to me. My advisor suggested considering the two-year pharmacy fellowship offered through my university. It was honestly something I had never considered. The opportunity encompassed a variety of experiences, including clinical ambulatory experience, teaching, and research. As I prayed and pondered this option during the following weeks, the Lord opened my mind and gave me a few revelations. An ambulatory care experience during an introductory pharmacy practice experience was what initially sparked my interest in completing a residency. I had also been praying for a post-graduate opportunity

close to the city where my husband had a stable job, since living apart during our second year of marriage or uprooting our family was not ideal. As I investigated the fellowship further, I discovered that the clinical site was located close to where my husband worked and it had an ambulatory care focus. An opportunity I had struggled to comprehend slowly began to form into a tangible, bright picture. It felt as if God had turned what I thought was a small window into a huge door with signs pointing right at it. Joshua 1:9 (NIV) reminded me, "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go." With this in mind, I followed God's prompting and took a step through that door.

As a federally qualified health center (FQHC) in the downtown area of a large city, my fellowship clinical practice provides care for many homeless, formerly homeless, and uninsured patients. The health center often furnishes certain essential medications free of charge. One of my primary functions in the health center is to provide medication

counseling to patients. While doing this activity one day, I entered an exam room to find that my patient was a homeless young man not much older than myself. I went through my routine of counseling him on his medications and asked if he had any questions. He looked at me calmly, and after a moment asked why I had decided to work there. Despite my surprise at his question, I immediately knew the answer: I had been called by God to this place and these people, even if only for a short time. My heart was at peace as I shared my calling to this position and to people in similar circumstances as him. He held my gaze with his own briefly before saying, "You are an angel. All of you here are angels." In that moment, I realized his burdens must be great to think of me as an angel, since I'm just an imperfect human fulfilling the duties of my job.

It is natural to face uncertainty in life — some face more, others less. Not all uncertainties are the same; rather, each individual has a unique soul writing its own life story. Many of the patients coming into the clinic carry constant burdens of uncertainty. My homeless patients are unsure as to when they will have their next meal, where it will come from, or whether they

will be warm at night. My patients living in the homeless shelter are uncertain whether their medications will be safe or if they will be stolen. Many of them are wondering what is next for them and what path they will take in life... and I'm sure some are wondering what their purpose is. We all have one thing in common: we all face paths of uncertainty. Can we ever really be sure of what this life will hold for us?

Even with the uncertainties of this life, there are certainties revealed to us through Scripture. I am certain that God values love, loves me unconditionally, and wants me to share His love through my interactions. I am certain that Jesus Christ sacrificed Himself for every single person in this world, when we clearly do not deserve it. I am certain of where my final destination will be at the end of my earthly life because of Jesus' sacrifice and my faith in Him. I have to wonder, do my patients share the same certainties that I do?

My interaction with the young man who called me an angel will forever be ingrained in my mind. It has taught me that even as a broken person, I can positively impact those around me. I can teach my patients the certainties of God and His promises in scripture. We share the love of God by being the hands and feet of Christ in this world, as we are called to do. There are simple strategies we can use to implement faith into our practice. First, as pharmacists we often see the same patients on a regular basis, allowing us to build strong and honest relationships with them. By doing this, we should be compassionate and humble with our words and actions. Creating a relationship built on

trust and respect is vital, since patients are more willing to listen to you, especially when you take the time to listen to them. This foundation can help open the door to conversations about faith and spirituality, which gets to the core of who we are as human beings. Secondly, as Christians we can also offer our thoughtful prayers when engaging particularly burdened patients. Prayer is a powerful and unlimited action that connects us intimately with God. Knowing we are praying for them may give patients a sense of hope and a longing to have this type of intimacy with God as well. Thirdly, we can apply the same principles to working relationships, which is an essential method of implementing faith into practice for pharmacists who are not involved in direct patient care. We still need to build strong relationships with colleagues, show respect and care, and pray for them. Last but not least, we should be mindful of our actions and interactions with others. We should strive to be honest and glorify God in all that we do, as there are always people watching us and learning from us. If an individual is unkind, we should respond with kindness and compassion to set a Christ-like example.

It will always be difficult to comprehend the outcome of specific situations and why our plans do not always work out as intended. Our plans often are not the same as God's, and we have to trust that He knows what is best for us. But as Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV) reminded the Israelites, so I am reminded: "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope

and a future." I am blessed with the current path God has given me, as I truly enjoy what I do and the patients I serve. Although I am no angel, I hope to impact my other patients as I did that young man. Serving the population that I do, I have an amazing opportunity to show the love of Christ to my patients at a time when they truly need it.

I do not know what is next for me after this career opportunity, but I trust in God and His perfect plan. And if I choose to be willing, God will use me and work through me wherever I am. Isaiah 41:10 (NIV) says, "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." I will continue on my uncertain path in this life with God as my guide, putting my trust in Him and striving to show His love to others who walk on their uncertain paths.



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Empathy in the Pharmacy Workplace: Instruction, Modeling, Facilitating, and Coaching

By Amy Holmes and Dawn Battise

Introduction

Empathy has been defined as the "ability to understand and view the world from other people's perspectives and to connect with their experiences or feelings."¹ Empathy is separate from sympathy, pity, or compassion.

Studies suggest that empathy may play an integral role in patient care.^{2,3,4,5,6} As pharmacists, how can we express empathy to our patients? The first step is identifying potential opportunities. A patient might directly express an emotion but, more often, a pharmacist will need to recognize indirect cues. This may appear as a patient alluding to a personal concern or nonverbal indications such as tone of voice or concerned facial expression. There are specific approaches to communicating with patients that cultivate empathy. First and foremost, it is important to use open-ended questions during interactions.⁷ When the opportunity is identified, it should be followed by prompting further conversation and naming the emotion (e.g., frustration, worry, fear). This can be accomplished through encouraging statements such as, "Would you tell me more about that?"

or affirmation such as, "It sounds like you are worried about your test results." Finally, continue to explore the patient's emotion with them. This can be continued with appropriate nonverbal clues (e.g., moving closer to the patient, facial expressions, eye contact) and active listening. Active listening starts with making eye contact and focusing on what the person is saying to you. When speaking, use phrasing that shows you respect the patient's emotions and are willing to support him or her. Overall, this may not only improve relationships but may also help reveal more subjective information from the patient which can impact care.⁸ Concerns have been raised regarding how the increasing use of telemedicine might impact empathy expression. Although some aspects (such as the ability to provide appropriate physical touch) will be forced to change, the overall principles can still be applied. The area of telemedicine and empathy expression warrants further consideration and research.⁹

Empathy in Patient Interactions

Although there is limited objective data to demonstrate measurable benefits of empathy on the pharmacist-patient relationship, many pharmacists would agree that empathy plays an important role in patient