

As I entered the humble offices of a local nonprofit agency, I smiled in gratitude at the small but private room my students and I had been given. This was my fourth ambulatory care practice site in 2 years and the only one that came with a truly functional space. We were ecstatic. I prayed this site would be permanent. We quickly settled in and began collaborating with the program manager, Julia,* to determine how we could best serve the healthcare needs of the community, particularly the Spanish speaking population. With my undergraduate training in missions and Spanish, I knew without a doubt that serving at this site was a divine appointment. God often moves puzzle pieces into place in the most unexpected ways. While the majority of our service involved patient education on various healthcare topics, we were also asked to consult with individual patients on an as needed basis.

One particular patient was Maria,* a young woman who was nearly bedridden and unable to attend any of our health information seminars. When Julia and I learned that she was having trouble obtaining her medications, we agreed to make a home visit at Maria's request. We arrived at Maria's run-down apartment complex, and I noticed a chicken meandering through the parking lot. Maria's broken front door, unable to shut all the way, was partially open so we called to her as we entered. Although she was grateful to see us, it was clear that she was in a great deal of pain due to rheumatoid arthritis. She rarely smiled and she didn't talk much. Our healthcare provider examined her as I reviewed her medications. Something brushed up against my leg, and I looked down to find Maria's rabbit sitting on my shoe. The scene was so reminiscent of previous mission trips that I had to smile. Yet my heart cried for Maria, a young woman who not only needed healthcare but hope.

As the Lord would have it, one of my former students was the clinical pharmacist at Maria's rheumatology clinic. With Maria's permission, I immediately called her to gain a better understanding of Maria's treatment plan and medication instructions. The pharmacist was able to help Maria enroll in a patient assistance program, and I requested that her medications be transferred to a more easily accessible pharmacy. Julia and I also began the process of connecting Maria with a physical therapist to help maintain what little mobility she had. These were small tasks that pharmacists do every day, but sometimes we forget the impact of small acts of service and kindness.

Julia and I returned to Maria's apartment a few weeks later to find an entirely different scenario. The door was still broken and the rabbit still roamed freely, but the bedridden patient from our first visit was gone. Oh, Maria was still bedridden, but the woman we saw this time was transformed. She smiled and conversed and proudly showed us all the physical therapy exercises she had been working on. She clearly explained how she was taking her medications and overall looked like she had a new lease on life. Her spirit was soaring, and I saw reflected on her face that day the one thing we all need every day: hope. It wasn't about the resources we helped her access or any of the services we provided. Maria was changed because she had hope; hope that things could be different and that someone cared. I can't recall if we prayed with her, but I hope we did.

As pharmacists we are often known for dispensing medication. This is an honorable role and an important one. But our greatest role is being dispensers of hope. Regardless of the setting or the patient, we have the opportunity each day to provide hope to those we encounter. 1 Peter 1:3 tells us that we have a living hope through Jesus. Paul also reminds us in Romans 15:13 that our God is a God of hope and that He enables us to overflow with hope through the power of His Spirit. When there's an overflow, there's nothing left to do but give it away. Hope, especially when it's rooted in Christ, motivates and empowers us. It does the same for our patients. We live in a broken world, and we don't always have the ability to meet every one of our patients' needs. But we can offer hope. When I have difficult days or get discouraged in my work, I think about Maria and, more importantly, I think about the hope I have in Christ. That hope is always accessible to us and with the help of God's Spirit, we can use our gifts and training to bring His hope to others.

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead..." – 1 Peter 1:3 (NIV)

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." – Romans 15:13 (NIV)

**Names have been changed to protect the individuals' privacy.*



Kristin is originally from West Monroe, LA, but has been blessed to call many places home over the years. As a pharmacist, Kristin started in a community setting before transitioning to a tribal outpatient clinic in Oklahoma, where she gained the majority of her practice experience. She served for three years as Assistant Professor of Pharmacy Practice at William Carey University School of Pharmacy in Mississippi before moving to Searcy, AR, to join Harding University College of Pharmacy in July 2024. She has a true passion for teaching and delights in any opportunity to encourage, equip, and empower students. Kristin is also a Licensed Master Social Worker and spent 5 years serving children and families through foster care and adoption before becoming a pharmacist. In addition, she completed her BA in Missions and Spanish and enjoys discovering ways to apply these skills to her current work and service. She loves travel, all things Christmas, and enjoys spending her free time with family and friends.

The Importance of Objective Truth in Pharmacy and Medical Missions

By Corey Furman

Within the practice of pharmacy, objective truth is paramount. Pharmacists rely on evidence-based medicine to ensure the safety and efficacy of the medications they dispense. This commitment to truth means adhering to rigorous scientific standards, verifying the accuracy of prescriptions, and ensuring that compounded medications meet stringent quality controls. The consequences of neglecting truth in pharmacy can be dire, as evidenced by tragic cases in which errors in compounding have led to patient deaths. Therefore, pharmacists must remain vigilant, continually updating their knowledge and skills to uphold the highest standards of care. *"Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth."* (John 17:17, NIV).

In contemporary society, the concept of objective truth is often challenged. Relativism and subjective interpretations of truth have become prevalent, leading to confusion and conflict. When objective truth is dismissed, it can result in a lack of accountability, misinformation, and ethical dilemmas. For pharmacists, this societal shift poses significant challenges. It is essential to advocate for objective truth, emphasizing its importance in ensuring patient safety and effective treatment. This is not only true in our daily practice setting, but also in the mission field. Humanism, with its focus on human values and secular ethics, can sometimes conflict with the true purpose of medical missions. While humanism emphasizes compassion and empathy, it overlooks the spiritual dimension of care that is central to Christian medical missions. Balancing these perspectives requires a careful approach, ensuring that the mission's objectives align with both humanitarian and spiritual goals. *"See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ."* (Colossians 2:8, NASB).

For Christians, the Bible represents the ultimate source of truth, guiding our beliefs and actions. In medical missions, this truth informs the purpose and approach to providing care. It is not merely about addressing physical ailments but also about ministering to the spiritual needs of patients. By grounding their work in the objective truth of scripture, medical missionaries can offer holistic care that addresses both body and soul. *"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."* (2 Timothy 3:16-17, NASB).

Pharmacists have a unique and impactful role in the medical mission field. Their expertise in medication management, patient education, and disease prevention is invaluable. By participating in medical missions, pharmacists can provide essential services such as dispensing medications, educating communities about health practices, and supporting local healthcare providers. Their contributions help bridge gaps in healthcare access and improve overall health outcomes in underserved areas. *"As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace."* (1 Peter 4:10, ESV).

To be effective in medical missions, pharmacists must incorporate the truth of their education into their purpose. This means applying their knowledge and skills with integrity, ensuring that their actions are guided by evidence-based practices and ethical principles. By doing so, they can provide care that is both scientifically sound and spiritually meaningful. It also means recognizing the greater importance of medical missions. While our time on Earth is fleeting, our eternal rest dwarfs the importance of merely caring for each other. While aiding and caring for