

Dec. 1, 2021

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“What is your role as a pharmacy student in advocating for the profession now and how will your role change once you are a practicing pharmacist?”

I have taken part in a variety of roles to advocate for the profession both as a pharmacy student, and now as a practicing pharmacist. As a second year student, I competed in and won the Alberta Pharmacy Student Association’s (APSA) RxFactor 2018, raising funds for the Movember (Men’s Health) initiative and highlighting the important role pharmacists play in advocating for mental health and breaking the boundaries of stigma that inhibit certain populations from seeking care. Having won the provincial competition, I had the opportunity to further my advocacy/fundraising on a national scale by participating in the Canada’s Next Top Pharmacist show at Pharmacy Student Professional Development Week (PDW) 2019 in St. John’s Newfoundland.

In my third year of pharmacy school, I took up more leadership roles through pharmacy student mentoring (first and second year students), intramural sport leadership (water polo), and continuing my involvement in the RxFactor competition in assisting with other contestant’s performances. I also started a fitness-inspiration Instagram page (@fat2fit.es) to help motivate my peers to help focus on and prioritize their mental and physical health amidst the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. I was fortunate enough to receive APSA’s student leadership award in spring 2021, and I believe this further reinforces the positive impact I have made towards my pharmacy peers by encouraging them to be leaders themselves.

My mission, since the start of pharmacy school, in advocating for the profession was to show both the public and fellow pharmacists/students alike that we, as pharmacists are the most accessible health care professionals out there, are cool, approachable, and equipped with the knowledge to assist most anyone with their health-related needs both big and small. I think it is exceptionally important that patients know the services pharmacists can provide to them, and have trust that we can provide those services safely and effectively, with their best interest in mind. This train of thought rings especially true as we progress through the COVID-19 pandemic and are faced with an un-ending list of questions and concerns from our patients regarding vaccines, testing, and the disease in general. My participation in the RxA’s “Vaccines Work!” campaign and consultation of the RxA leadership cohort have helped me continue my above mission of pharmacy advocacy and improvement of patient care through quality pharmacy practice.

My fourth year of pharmacy school lead me to several opportunities to advance the profession through networking and mentorship. I participated in a leadership rotation with Bob Sprague, of Alberta pharmacy fame, where I collaborated with various pharmacists, physicians, and nurses within the AHS hierarchy to develop standardized pharmacist care plans in rural long-term care facilities, provide pharmacy guidance to implement changes to the long-term care drug formulary, and educating the AHS paramedic team on drug pharmacokinetics to improve their drug therapy utilization. I really enjoyed

having this opportunity to show fellow health care workers the expertise and sheer versatility that pharmacists provide to the team, and I hope to someday return to this field of work again.

Now, after 3 months of working as a licensed pharmacist, I am managing a rural community pharmacy in Brooks, Alberta. I have the pleasure and responsibility of providing quality pharmacy services (vaccines, rapid tests, care plans) to patients from the surrounding areas of Rosemary, Duchess, Tilley, Rolling Hills, Gem, Jenner, Iddesleigh, Patricia, Rainer, and Scandia, who otherwise wouldn't have access to such services. I have lead my team through various changes, including training and setting up the store for centralized blister packing, and am in the process of hiring a pharmacy assistant, looking forward to mentoring them to help optimize workflow within the pharmacy. Going forward, I am working towards getting my APA, CDE, and plan to improve my networking with the surrounding physician clinics to educate them on the services pharmacists provide and how we can work together to better patient care.