

# Carving Advocacy into my Professional Identity

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Since beginning my pharmacy journey, I have been extremely impressed by the strength and unity of our profession. Even as a naïve pharmacy student at the outset of my career, it was evident that pharmacists are incredibly well respected and trusted healthcare professionals. I quickly realized that the privilege of this respect was not by chance; our profession cultivated this opportunity through tremendous leadership and advocacy. Pharmacy practice in Alberta has developed a world-renowned scope of practice that has redefined our profession, and it is truly an exciting time to join the profession of pharmacy. I often reflect on the qualities that define a strong advocate, and I have made a commitment to integrating advocacy into my professional identity both as a student and now as a practicing pharmacist.

Advocacy to me begins with a self-awareness of potential, defining a proactive vision for the future, and nurturing the desired outcome through leadership, humility, and passion. As a pharmacy student surrounded by fervent young professionals, I quickly realized an opportunity to advocate for our profession by promoting these qualities to my colleagues. As a result, I became heavily involved in our student association APSA, eventually serving as the Vice President Social in my 3rd year. Through this appointment, I was able to foster an inclusive student community and facilitate developmental opportunities for every pharmacy student by restructuring the social portfolio and spearheading the Mint Cup initiative. Pharmacy students across all years of the program were divided into 10 different teams, and points were awarded for participation and completion of team-building challenges. On an individual level, this structure allowed students to develop advocacy and leadership skills through active participation, realization of individual talents, contribution to a common goal, and promoting team spirit. The Mint Cup also encouraged engagement on a professional level, by giving students an opportunity for pharmacy advocacy within our community. Awarding points significantly increased participation in events such as our yearlong blood drive, the CIBC Run for the Cure, the Movember initiative, and our Food Drive for Edmonton's most vulnerable populations.

As a practicing pharmacist, advocacy continues to be an integral part of my professional identity. Upon graduation, it was essential for me to seek further opportunities to develop my clinical, leadership, and advocacy skills. I craved an opportunity to learn from leaders in our profession, and as a result, I decided to pursue a hospital residency at the Red Deer Regional Hospital Centre.

The mentorship of exceptional clinical pharmacists on the frontline of patient care has taught me how to implement our full scope of practice. With growing confidence, I am able not only to demonstrate clinical skills but to continuously advocate to the interdisciplinary team just how vital the role of the pharmacist truly is. One of the skills that I have refined during residency is individualizing goals of therapy. Accurately understanding what matters to each patient has significantly increased my proficiency at building professional relationships, demonstrating to patients how a pharmacist can be a part of their healthcare journey, and in turn, allows me to advocate for my patients to the healthcare team. At a higher level, residency has provided a tremendous opportunity to engage and network with a multitude of pharmacy leaders. This includes opportunities to work closely with the hospital pharmacy management team to understand how the pharmacy team integrates itself within Alberta Health Services, as well as engaging in discussions about the roles of workplace culture to support pharmacists in reaching their own professional goals. Furthermore, I had the opportunity to engage with both the CSHP and ACP leadership teams to gain a deeper understanding of their advocacy roles within the profession, and the decision-making processes that continue to drive the Albertan pharmacy practice forward. I am grateful for the invaluable learning opportunities I have gained throughout my residency journey so far and am excited for what comes next.

Advocacy and leadership are vital components in advancing our profession, and I believe each of us has a duty of implementing these skills to build the future of pharmacy practice. As a pharmacist, I will advocate for our profession by continuing to incorporate leadership, humility, and passion into my professional identity and nurturing these qualities in my colleagues. By building strong relationships and communicating effectively with both patients and the healthcare team, I will continue to strive towards my vision of becoming a leader of the pharmacy profession.