

As a pharmacy student, I have had a number of opportunities to advocate for the advancement of the pharmacist's role in the healthcare of Albertans. My time at the University of Alberta has given me contact with experts in a wide variety of different topics and fields of healthcare, allowing me to see the breadth of the pharmacy profession and have a more comprehensive understanding, providing a foundation to identify and understand emerging trends and problems in the profession. I have also had the chance to build a network of peers with whom I can share knowledge with and learn from, and can ask questions and push myself and others to collaborate on finding solutions. I am able to bring my own unique perspective to the profession and through that perspective help identify problems that are often overlooked or misunderstood and make unique contributions to solutions. For example, I had the chance to bring attention to current challenges faced by queer patients in the healthcare system, by holding a lecture on some of the intricacies of queerness in healthcare for my peers, which I feel is especially important due to the current climate of healthcare decisions being made by people who are not adequately informed on the complexity of sensitive healthcare topics.

I know that it can be difficult for working pharmacists to have the time to participate in continuing education, limiting how much they can learn as things change, so I have valued my time as a student where I have had the chance to learn and grow as a healthcare professional. I have had the benefit of learning the most up to date information and emerging trends in healthcare treatments and protocols, without any preconceived notions about them. I am thus in a strong position to focus on emerging topics such as STBBI care and queer healthcare simply by asking questions and acknowledging that the status quo may need to be changed or updated. Alberta has recently been struggling with a dramatic rise in the number of STBBI cases, and I was able to give a lecture to students and healthcare professionals alike about the pharmacist's role in HIV prevention via Alberta Health Services' HIV PrEP program, and advocated for pharmacist screening of STBBIs to help identify cases in an environment where patients may be more comfortable and reduce strain on the medical system. My passion for these topics has spurred me to take extra courses and go above and beyond what is taught during my degree.

As I navigate my career and move from being a pharmacy student to a practising pharmacist, my role in advocacy will remain mostly unchanged save for a few key differences. As my level of experience and education grows, I will have the opportunity to become a subject matter expert myself. I will continue to advocate for the pharmacist's role in STBBI healthcare and to improve the healthcare experience for queer patients, and continue to learn so that I can be a resource for my peers who wish to improve as well. I will also have the opportunity to teach and precept new pharmacy students, helping them improve for when they are practising pharmacists themselves, and thus advancing the practice of pharmacy beyond my own sphere.

Students also come with an added benefit of keeping me abreast of how best practices change and evolve during my career. At the same time that I am asking questions of them and encouraging them to think about and collaborate on potential solutions, they can also ask questions of me, helping me identify my own weaknesses and areas where I can grow and improve. I feel that as a practising pharmacist it is important to not only advocate for what I believe will help push my profession to be greater, but to also be receptive to the issues others in my profession are advocating for.

I believe advocacy in pharmacy is not just about making others aware of what you think is important but to also help them understand why it is important. I hope to not only continue my advocacy but likewise to listen when others advocate and to join them on their journey of advocating for themselves and our profession. With this passion, I will continue to focus on doing my best to help

Albertans have the best healthcare they can, and continue to help others develop their own passion while providing them with the best possible knowledge that I can.