

A Challenge to Commit to Excellence

Address delivered to UW School of Pharmacy graduates by PSW president

by Susan Sutter, RPh

Dean Roberts, faculty, parents, friends and graduates: On behalf of the Pharmacy Society of Wisconsin, allow me to congratulate each of you graduates on your significant accomplishment. It is indeed an honor to have the opportunity to address this graduating class. As many of the graduates and faculty know, I have the unique privilege of being here, not only as the president of PSW, but also as the mother and mother-in-law of two of the graduates. I share with each of you parents the great joy and pride that this day brings. I know that each of us will treasure this ceremony as one of our many hopes and dreams for our children becomes a reality today.

Another thing the majority of parents here today probably share, if you grew up in Wisconsin, were the glory years of the Green Bay Packers and Coach Vince Lombardi. I certainly have fond memories of our family ritual of watching the Packers play each fall Sunday afternoon. The legacy of Vince Lombardi's leadership is evident in many of his inspiring quotes. One seemed especially appropriate for a day like today: "The quality of a person's life is in direct proportion to that person's commitment to excellence, regardless of the chosen field of endeavor." Since we are here today to celebrate the choice of a very specific field of endeavor – becoming a pharmacist – I think Coach Lombardi would have allowed me the latitude to paraphrase his quote for these graduates. "The quality of a pharmacist's life is in direct proportion to his or her commitment to excellence." I challenge you to think about how those words will come alive in your career. Allow me to share a few of my thoughts.

In health care and pharmacy specifically, excellence can be, and is increas-

ingly being measured by, such metrics as the accuracy of the dispensing process; consistent use of best practice standards for medication use; cost-effective choice and management of medications; and most importantly, by the quality of the outcome for our patients. Without question, we must not only meet these professional responsibilities, we also have a responsibility to "raise the bar." And that's



Participation in professional organizations is a natural way to reach beyond your practice setting and experience and be a part of commitment within a profession.

where commitment comes in – the part of one's character that does not allow you to become comfortable or complacent, but drives you to continue to learn, advance, and contribute to the profession. For the most part, I believe commitment is a learned trait – one that is experienced and

taught from a young age by parents, teachers, and other role models in a person's life. You have experienced four years here at the School of Pharmacy, and it is evident the commitment this University and faculty has had to providing you with a first-class education – something you will use, build upon, and cherish the rest of your life.

As you start your career, I encourage you to look for role models not only within the new group of colleagues you'll be working with, but beyond. Participation in professional organizations is a natural way to reach beyond your practice setting and experience and be a part of commitment within a profession. As the state's professional society, PSW is committed to the advancement and advocacy of your profession, in all practice settings. Earlier this week, you were forwarded an email offering you a graduation gift of complementary membership in PSW. It is our

way of having the pharmacists of the state say, "Welcome to the profession."

The phrase in the quote "commitment to excellence" reminds me of another familiar saying, "You can do anything if you put your mind to it." That's certainly what achieving excellence has been with the demanding and rigorous academic coursework that brought you to this day, and continuing as a life-long learner is expected

of you as you maintain and advance your practice skills. But I would add, "You can do anything if you put your heart into it." It is in the heart of a person that one finds the will, the determination and the commitment that is needed to sustain excellence and continue to look to the future for new challenges.

Putting your mind into something without putting your heart into it is like having the knowledge and skills to achieve excellence, but lacking the intangible human quality of commitment. I invite you to put both your mind and heart into being a pharmacist. You will all practice the profession. But, I challenge you to be a part of advancing the profession and experience how a commitment to excellence will determine the quality of your professional life. ●