

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

# Stories of Pharmacists Who Go the Extra Mile

Pharmacists do make a difference for their patients. Here are three examples. This "Making a Difference" column will appear periodically. Our readers are invited to submit their stories.

While working at Walgreens as a pharmacy intern, I recently had an encounter with a patient who was undergoing dialysis. She was taking a phosphate binder, sevelamer, and was having problems with uncontrolled intestinal gas. A friend told her about Beano, and she had tried a couple of doses and thought it worked pretty well. She inquired of me as to whether it was safe to take eight to nine Beano tablets per day as suggested on the bottle. She said she had asked her physician about it, and he told her that he did not know if it was safe and left it at that. I had not had any previous experiences with Beano, and my supervising pharmacist was unsure, so I got the patient's name and telephone number and told her that I would research her question and get back to her.

When I got home that night I searched for any articles or trials that I could find, but found nothing. There wasn't even a complete ingredient list that I could find. After seeking advice from an instructor at the pharmacy school, I called the patient the next day and told her that Beano was probably safe, but that she should take the bottle with her to her next dialysis session so the dialysis staff could see it and monitor her to make sure her lab values were appropriate.

While I would have preferred to give the patient a more definitive answer, she was very grateful and thanked me for going out of my way and taking the time to help her. Her response really made me feel good about myself and reminded me

why I wanted to become a pharmacist in the first place. One thing my experience taught me is that it is not the professional environment that makes the pharmacist, but it is the pharmacist's motivation and heart that makes a job fulfilling. If one truly cares about patients, it is possible to give them the best care possible.

— Randy Griffiths  
Third-year PharmD student  
UW School of Pharmacy

**“The patient's response really made me feel good about myself and reminded me why I wanted to become a pharmacist in the first place.”**

The emergency department pharmacist was present at the arrival of a level one trauma involving a pedestrian hit by a motor vehicle traveling at a high speed. The patient had sustained significant abdominal and lower extremity trauma complicated by respiratory failure and profound blood loss resulting in hypovolemic shock. The emergency medical service intubated the patient at the scene

utilizing a neuromuscular blocking agent to induce paralysis.

Upon presentation at the emergency department, a subsequent dose of neuromuscular blocking agent was requested. The pharmacist supplied the drug and alerted the medical staff that no medications were being utilized to provide sedation or analgesia. Neuromuscular blocking agents completely paralyze the muscles of the body allowing a procedure like intubation to be performed without resistance. However, the person's awareness of their environment and their sense of pain is undiminished.

It is important therefore, to give drugs

to reduce anxiety and pain when giving neuromuscular blocking agents. Initially, this recommendation was resisted due to the lack of combativeness on the part of the patient under the influence of pharmacologic paralysis. Subsequent discussion about the consciousness of the person despite the presence of neuromuscular blockade resulted in acceptance of the pharmacist's recommendations. A sedative and analgesic were subsequently administered.

The value of this effort was acknowledged by several physicians and nurses.

— Jacob B. Hatch, PharmD  
Critical Care Resident  
Clinical Instructor  
UW Hospital and Clinics, Madison

A 74-year-old woman (LT), a regular pharmacy patient, was picking up a routine prescription refill at the Morton Pharmacy in Neenah.

During the counseling encounter, Manager Jeff Cushman, RPh noticed that LT appeared jaundiced. The whites of her eyes were yellow and her skin had a faint, but noticeable tinge. LT has a condition that causes her skin to be reddish, but Cushman recognized that this was a definite change from the normal for LT.

In response to Cushman's questions, LT indicated that she was not aware of any other symptoms and had not noticed the change in her appearance, nor had any family or friends brought it to her attention. Jeff advised her to see her physician as soon as possible. In fact she did see her physician that day, and after referral, testing and scanning, was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. She had surgery and her surgeon told her that, because it was caught very early, they were confident the whole tumor had been removed. LT has had chemotherapy follow-up and is currently doing well. Her prognosis is good.

— submitted by  
Kurt Holm, RPh  
Morton Drug Company, Neenah

Want to share your pharmacy success story? Submit your "Making a Difference" tales to Curt Johnson, PharmD at [editor@pswi.org](mailto:editor@pswi.org).