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## Research Article

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### **CREATE A LEADERSHIP LEGACY (L2) BY DEVELOPING A PHARMACY PRACTICE VISION**

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#### **ABSTRACT**

**Objective:** This article explores the importance of having a vision within pharmacy practice to create a Leadership Legacy (L2). This is shown through the study of current literature and data gathered by the researcher from prominent pharmacists who hold or have held national positions within the profession. The article includes a leadership vision activity that pharmacists can implement.

**Setting:** The research was conducted through extensive one hour interviews with national and international pharmacist practitioners. This data was reviewed for themes and the highlights of the results from four U.S. pharmacists are provided in the article.

**Practice description:** Pharmacists who hold or have held national positions within the profession share their thoughts on their Leadership Legacy (L2). The information pertaining to their specific vision is incorporated into the article.

**Practice intervention:** A vision can guide a pharmacist's practice and provide ways to navigate goals and outcomes within the profession.

**Evaluation:** Four US pharmacists were asked about their Leadership Legacy (L2). The aspects of an L2 include vision, foundation, intentional focus, meaningful relationships, resiliency, and sustainability. The qualitative data and comments provided by the pharmacists explore their ideas and ways they have incorporated a vision into professional practice.

**Results:** The pharmacists interviewed offered insight into how their specific visions, as well as how they incorporated it into their professional lives. These highlights include wisdom from the various pharmacists and ways to continuously improve the profession in various areas with a vision.

**Conclusion:** Incorporating a vision into practice can allow a pharmacist to have a focus for the intended future. It is a way to ensure that the practice and profession are on track for better outcomes for patients.

**Keywords:** Vision; Leadership legacy; Practice; Pharmacists.

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Leaders have changed the profession of pharmacy throughout the centuries. These pharmacists have influenced the practice through the enhancement of drugs, developing better outcomes for patients, and becoming an integral part of the healthcare team. When an individual creates a positive change within the pharmacy profession, it can be known as a Leadership Legacy (L2). An L2 is the imprint and significance of our talents and

passions that exist long after our physical presence is gone. This presence can pertain to our roles within organizations and/or the impact of a pharmacist in the overall profession. One of the best ways to begin to determine a legacy is to reflect upon what we have done thus far [1]. Another way is to start taking advantage of opportunities [2]. It is also important for people to be flexible and adaptable to change [3]. A legacy that

incorporates strategic changes can influence the profession [4]. An L2 framework designed by the researcher and reinforced through conducted interviews of prominent pharmacists explored the various aspects of how one can leave a Leadership Legacy. These L2 aspects include: Vision, foundation, intentional focus, meaningful relationships, resiliency, and sustainability. The first step to leave an L2 is to focus on the vision that you want to incorporate into your practice. For the purposes of this article, the author will share the perspectives of four U.S. pharmacists, including their insights in having a vision in the pharmacy profession. The author will also demonstrate an activity that can help develop a professional practice vision. Vision is the cornerstone of creating an impact in the pharmacy profession. A vision can invoke a sense of purpose [5] and a direction that can keep professionals on track. The vision must be unambiguous and prominently align with the values of the professional [6]. In order to be successful, "Vision, constancy of purpose and a sense of mission need to prevail." [7]. Within a profession, it is having similar philosophies amongst practitioners that will all a common practice [8,9]. It is through this commonality that people will work together toward a specific outcome [10]. As a practitioner it is important that the values that you have are identified and align with a vision. As the interprofessional focus on patients continues to evolve, it will be important for pharmacists to articulate the vision in the process. "Leadership competencies and more specifically a strategic vision are essential to managing increasingly complex healthcare organizations and change...." [11]. To have a vision in practice allows for a focus and meaning. Lea Soupara, senior vice-president of the United Postal Service described in a speech that the century old organization could not survive "without strong leadership...without leaders who think strategically and develop future leaders who can sustain the vision" [12]. A vision has various definitions and elements. According to Kantrabuta, a vision includes brevity, clarity, future orientation, stability, challenge, abstractness and desirability or ability to inspire [13]. Overall, a vision "describes a desired future" or image [14,15]. Vision is how our futures will manifest. A vision must be inspiring to others: "Leadership is not about selling a vision; it's about showing people how the vision can directly benefit them and how their specific needs can be satisfied." [16]. Success of a vision can continue if it is used as a "guiding framework" for work [17]. Not only is it important to

integrate the vision into our work, communication of the vision and expectations shared with key identified groups are also equally valuable for successful outcomes [18,19].

## METHODS

The L2 framework was developed based on the work of many different researchers and authors. To test the validity of the framework, specific questions were developed to be used as a starting point in a series of interviews and discussions with prominent positional pharmacy leaders. Interview questions and the overall research process was evaluated and approved as exempt by the universities internal review board (IRB). The author designed multiple questions that encompassed each of the six L2 aspects. Hour-long interviews were conducted with national and international leaders. Specific questions guided the discussion, and interviewees were encouraged to elaborate as appropriate. The interviews were conducted with four people from the United States, and one person from each of the following countries: Australia, Canada, Finland, India, the Netherlands, Portugal and Switzerland. The interviewees were selected based on prominent positions they have held in national and/or international professional organizations, and peer referral. The purpose of interviewing representatives from across the globe was to note any consistencies and/or inconsistencies related to their perspective of leadership legacy. No significant differences were detected based on nationality. While their leadership style varied, their responses to the legacy interview questions were consistent. The consistency of responses among the interviewees indicates that the framework and L2 practice has merit and the possibility of replication. The framework is intended to help guide other leaders to achieve their optimal outcomes in leadership roles.

### The Leadership Legacy (L2) Framework:

1. Vision - the direction you are striving for, unwavering
2. Foundation - keeps you grounded and anchored
3. Intentional Focus - selecting purposeful energy and activities
4. Meaningful Relationships - people in our lives as a catalyst or part of the legacy
5. Resiliency - overcome obstacles; change and adapt to continue on the pathway
6. Sustainability - having a long lasting outcome and communicated epilogue

In the interviews, each L2 aspect included 7-8 questions; this article covers those questions related specifically to vision. The leaders interviewed shared the visions they created and the continuing impact of these visions in the pharmacy profession.

## RESULTS

All interviews were conducted in person for approximately one hour. Each interview was videotaped. Interviewees received the questions prior to the meeting, however the researcher elaborated on questions or revisited them throughout the interview. Once the interviews were complete, they were then analyzed using NVivo 10 software. Each response was broken down and analyzed by coding similar words or phrases, and then grouping those coded words/phrases. A researcher reviewed these for accuracy and to make sure the software program interpreted individual words and responses appropriately. The video was evaluated and captured for additional vision highlights and insights from the practitioners. On average each one-hour interview conducted had an approximate 15-hour review of the data and interviews. Qualitative data showed only slight variations in points stressed by interviewees related to aspects, actions, and character traits that assisted them through their leadership journey. For example, a common theme that emerged for the participants was that a vision helped them work through the ambiguity. Primary themes were providing a focus, brand, resilience when things became difficult, and providing continuous energy. Additional themes that emerged through the interview on the topic of vision were inclusivity and managing change.

## DISCUSSION

Interviewees were selected based on their impact in the pharmacy profession. While there are other leaders across the nation who has greatly improved pharmacy, these four leaders have proven track records on realizing their vision(s). A highlight of their experience in roles is included to be shared as a model and inspiration for other practitioners. It should be further noted that each of the U.S. leaders interviewed are personally known to the researcher. As mentioned earlier, the vision has to be inspiring and motivate others. The vision has to allow others to make a difference. Dr. Marilyn Speedie, longstanding dean of the University of Minnesota College of Pharmacy, shared that the impact of a vision is based on being inclusive of others: "Vision has to do with maximizing impact of whatever unit I'm associated with and myself. If you're going to make a difference and maximize the impact you have – you can't do it yourself. It has to be done through inclusion. Nothing expresses inclusion more than sharing somebody's passion for something. But also respect - It's all about respect. At least for other people who have a passion and are pursuing and who

also want to make a difference. If that is what you respect, than you have to be inclusive." Having is a vision is about making an impact beyond self. Many of these leaders focused on how they could change the profession and improve the lives of others. Vision is about having the fortitude to look into future needs and make changes to create the outcomes that are intended. According to Dr. Lowell Anderson, former president of the American Pharmacy Association, "I like it when pharmacists can be seen as heroes. We were going to invest our time in the 'green pharmacy' initiative – and it's important to focus on areas where others care about." A vision can help you discover your greatness and what you are capable of achieving. As Dr. Norrie Thomas, co-founder of the Academy of Managed Care Pharmacy, noted, "...A higher vision, the voice that says, we are going to do something great – we are going to park our egos at the door and work together to build something. And we did form Academy of Managed Care Pharmacy." The Academy of Managed Care Pharmacy began with eight introductory members and currently has more than 7,000 members. The vision began with the need of the profession and grew into something that continues to be supported by passionate pharmacists. Once a vision is close to realization, it becomes something for further improvement. A vision is never complete; it is continuously evolving. Dr. Randall Seifert, current Minnesota Pharmacist Association president, attributed his success in the profession to "always having a vision and finding ways to make it better. I think you need to be intentionally disruptive at times, in a good way. We have to continue to try to improve. There are always better ways to do something.... We need to have leadership that's not only visionary, but also disruptive without being destructive. ....Always having a vision of how can I do this better." Activity: Create a professional pharmacy practice vision. Creating a vision that is inspiring to self and others is critical [20]. It is the strength of the vision that can create a drive to strive and achieve. In order to realize a vision, it is pertinent to ask, "What people are seeing, saying, and feeling" [20]. A vision that motivates will keep interest and foster the necessary changes and strategy [4]. To further explore the Vision concept in the pharmacy profession, an activity follows to help synthesize ideas and opportunities that can help create a vision to be implemented. Take some time today to start writing your vision. Begin your vision by reflecting on how you see your practice today and in the future. Review what you overcame to

get into the position that you currently have or are involved in. Discover what were the important decisions that helped you to take your pathway. This part of reflection is what will help you to identify the themes of your vision, what you see as important, and possibly what you would like to continue striving toward in the future. Start by writing your answers to the following questions:

What are the opportunities that surround my pharmacy practice?

What are the strengths that I have to further develop these opportunities?

My future ideal pharmacy practice includes...

My patient outcomes are...

How I see myself contributing to the future of the pharmacy profession (1-5 years)

How I see myself contributing to the future of the pharmacy profession (5-10 years)

Regardless of the answers provided during this vision exercise, having the fortitude to work through the questions to determine a future is important. Each person may have various ideas and concepts for a vision. Striving toward them and taking the steps in the direction can keep one motivated for change. Each answer will contribute to your own vision.

As you think about the past, answer the questions, and envision your future, consider the following: What are the themes that emerge for you and your practice? Can you identify the way in which you are unique in your profession? What you will bring to the future of the pharmacy profession? Use these themes, stories, and ideas to articulate what you see as your own pharmacy practice vision.

My pharmacy practice vision is....

Now is your opportunity to take your vision and share it with others in the profession. Keep your vision displayed in a prominent location so that you can look at it frequently. Also, this is a good opportunity to gather feedback from other colleagues and share your vision during professional meetings, department gatherings, or mentoring sessions. Having a vision that is shared with others can create momentum and a larger impact on your practice and the overall profession. Create the future of pharmacy and make it the best for you, your colleagues, and your patients. Change begins with the start of each pharmacist searching to fulfill a vision. This is the chance for you to leave your own L2.

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