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The New Pharmacist: 46 Doses of Advice

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“Drawing on her many and varied personal experiences as well as conversations with numerous young pharmacists launching their professional careers over the years, Dr. Albert has compiled sage advice for the recent pharmacy graduate seeking his or her best niche in the profession where one can really make a difference.”

— JOSEPH L. FINK III, PROFESSOR OF PHARMACY LAW AND POLICY,
UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY COLLEGE OF PHARMACY

THE NEW PHARMACIST: 46 DOSES OF ADVICE



Getting into pharmacy school: **check.**
Passing organic chemistry: **check.**
Graduating from pharmacy school: **check.**
Passing pharmacist board exams: **check.**
Landing first pharmacist job: **check.**

WHAT'S NEXT?

Pharmacy school was the easy part. This book addresses the much more difficult part for newly licensed pharmacists: what comes **after** pharmacy school? This practical, yet inspirational book is for pharmacists 0-10 years into their careers, who also might ponder what else is out there—in terms of professional and career development—for years and decades to come.



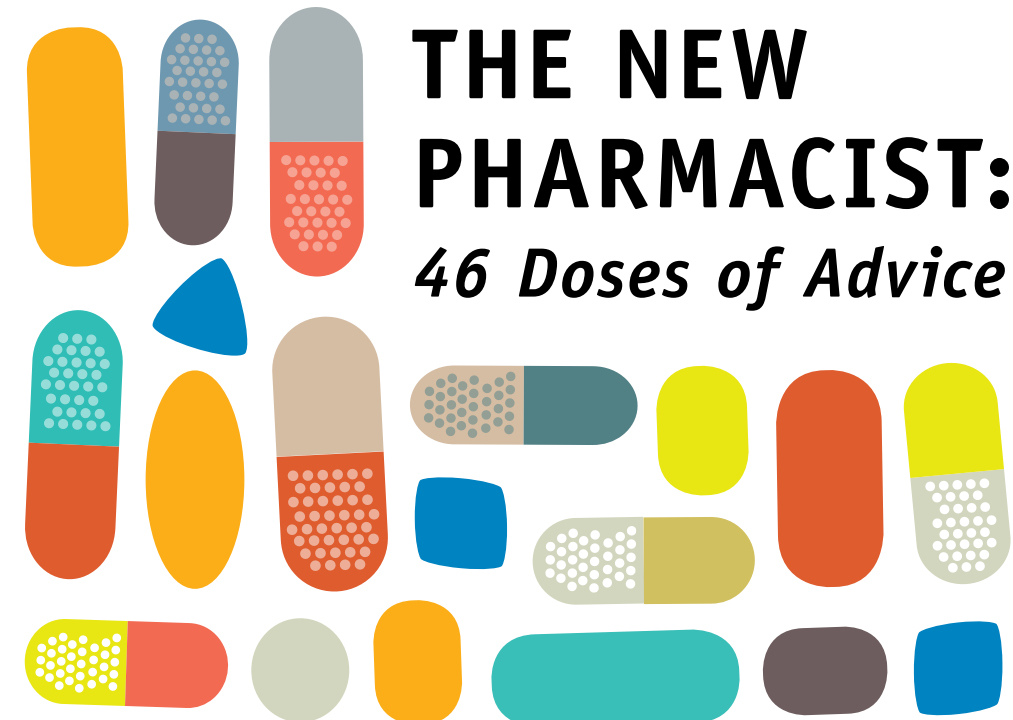
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THE NEW PHARMACIST: 46 Doses of Advice

ERIN L. ALBERT, MBA, PHARM.D, JD

ALBERT

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**THE NEW
PHARMACIST:
*46 Doses of Advice***



THE NEW PHARMACIST: *46 Doses of Advice*

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THE NEW PHARMACIST: *46 Doses of Advice*

To all past, present, and future pharmacists

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	1	'Friend' a Lawyer and an Accountant	40
Introduction (And Why I Wrote This Book).....	3	Network, Network, Network.....	41
<i>46 Doses of Advice</i>		Consider Certifications on Medication Therapy	
Thank the Universe	9	Management (MTM) and Immunizations.....	43
No Residency Required	11	Start Organizing Your Jedi High Council	44
Get a Personal Professional Liability Insurance Policy	13	There are Two of You: Manage Both of Them	47
Read the Pharmacy Practice Act of Your State(s)	14	Re-engage with Your Alma Mater.....	50
Get to Know Your Local Police.....	15	Keep your CV and Resume Up to Date at All Times.....	52
Invest in a Pair of Amazingly Comfortable		Gather ye References.....	54
and/or Orthotic Shoes	16	Keep a Hero File	56
Keep Your Promises	17	Attend One National Pharmacy Meeting per Year	58
Keep a Notebook	19	Attend One National Non-Pharmacy Meeting a Year.....	61
Dealing with Egos.....	21	Pay Off Your Student Loans as Quickly as Possible	63
Clean up Your Messes	22	For the Ladies Only.....	65
Treat Your Techs Like Rock Stars	23	Give Back.....	68
Be Sensitive to Literacy and Cultural Differences.....	24	How to Deal with Boredom	70
Toot Your Own Horn, Without Being a Tool	25	Academia as a Gig.....	74
Get your Continuing Education (CE) Groove on	27	Slowing the Roll of the FICA Dude: Entrepreneurship on the Side..	78
Join Three Professional Groups	28	Board Certifications	82
Take Your Boss to Lunch	29	Grad School for the Pharmacist	84
CEO of You, Inc.	31	Business School for the Pharmacist	86
Start a 401k/403b and IRA	32	Law School for the Pharmacist.....	88
Read the Oath of a Pharmacist, Again.....	34	From Community Practice to Industry.....	90
Remember Why You Chose Pharmacy	34	Transitioning to Hospital, Long Term Care,	
Read.....	36	and other Areas of Pharmacy Practice	92
Write.....	37	This is the End of the Beginning: Conclusion	95
Speak	39		

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To my pharmacist mentors.

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Introduction

(And Why I Wrote This Book)

Once upon a time, in the early 1990s, I graduated from pharmacy school for the first time. I can tell you, almost 20 years into my pharmacy career now, I had no book on how to evolve, grow and manage my career right out of school. We barely had computers then, and the Internet had just been discovered by the masses when we had something called “e-mail” that we barely used before graduation. On top of the pre-technology explosion, I was a first-generation college graduate in my family. (I know, it sounds like the stone ages, right?)

However, the world has become much more complex; healthcare in the U.S. is no exception. One in nearly every five dollars in the U.S. is now spent on healthcare, and approximately 10-25% of healthcare dollars are now spent on drugs. When I say drugs, I mean everything from aspirin, all the way up to multi-hundred-thousand-dollar treatments in specialty pharmacy, which is where all the growth in pharmacy is happening as I write this.

When I originally graduated from pharmacy school, (back in the stone ages), I thought I was going to work for one company, in community practice retail pharmacy, and serve one small town for thirty years as the local pharmacist. That was the plan, anyway. So, did it turn out that way?

Not at all. Now that I’ve served my profession for 20 years, I’ve been a community practice pharmacist at several different pharmacies and chains—in big cities and small towns. I’ve also worked in the pharmaceutical and biotechnology industries in various capacities—in pharmacovigilance (adverse event reporting), clinical research and operations, medical affairs, and medical marketing. I’ve also taught now in a pharmacy school for seven years. On top of my career “day jobs,” I’ve also started two successful businesses as an entrepreneur

(one inside healthcare, and one outside). Last, I never stopped learning, by returning to school at night, earning degrees in business (a MBA), completing pharmacy (by first earning a B.S. in pharmacy, then a Pharm.D.), and finally law school—and passed the dreaded bar exam.

These past 7 years while teaching, I've noticed a pattern. When students graduate from pharmacy school, many often return to me 18-24 months after graduation—either via e-mail, voicemail or social media. They are licensed pharmacists out in practice. But inevitably, they always reach out and ask me the following:

“Dr. Albert, is this all there is?”

I wrote this book to discuss the answer(s) to this question. First off, if you're the one asking this question—no, what you are doing right now isn't all there is professionally (and not that there's anything wrong with what you're doing professionally, either). I'm living proof that pharmacy can take on a lot of different professional meanings, and one can have a limitless number of professional career paths with a pharmacy degree. However, not all paths are easy and obvious. I'm still trying to figure them all out, and I've been at this for a while.

This book is for the newly minted pharmacist, who after 6+ years of pharmacy school and undergraduate education may need a little more guidance before going off into the wild “real” world. That, and I'm hoping I can just hand this little handy dandy book over to all those previous students who ask me if this is all there is...I'll now have something to back up the short answer of ‘no’ with a smile on my face, and a book in hand.

Would this book be useful to those who have made pharmacy a later in life or second career? I think so. But you'd need to read on to figure out if I'm giving you anything useful. Intentionally, that's why I made this book affordable. You've been hit with enough fees and tuition of late that I don't need to pour gasoline on your debt fire.

I'm assuming you already landed your first job out there in the real world. (You did rock your rotations, right?) Maybe you were selected for a PGY-1 residency or fellowship, or maybe you didn't get selected for either. Frankly, I don't really care if you went the residency route or not, and you can still rock your profession without a residency or fellowship (and I'll talk more about that later).

This book is NOT about writing your resume, dealing with interview questions or negotiating your first job offer. That, honestly, should have been taken care of by now. I'm more interested in sharing with you tips on how to manage the process AFTER you've acquired your first job, and I'm here to tell you how to rock into your NEXT and/or BEST gig. (Again, not that there's anything wrong with your CURRENT gig, either...your first gig may be your best!)

What I'm about to share either worked for me, or I tragically failed at in a particular area. It may sound a little preachy. And while I'm certainly not perfect, here's my intent with this book: I want to prevent as many of the blunders, mishaps and mistakes I've made in my career from happening to you during your career. True, you're also going to need to make mistakes and learn the hard way on your own too, and I can't guarantee or warrant in any way that what worked for me will work for you. But look at this book as another opportunity to learn and maybe, just maybe, avoid some mistakes that I made along the way. I want to share my trials and tribulations with you, because if it helps one of you make a great career decision, this book has done its job. I'm thrilled to have helped you become the best professional you can be, albeit in a small way.

Why 46 doses? Why not 50, or 52, or 100? I don't have a sexy reason why 46 ended up being the number in this book. It just felt like it was the wisdom I wish I had possessed when I first got out of school retrospectively, without being too much information. Besides, you can literally read one dose per week (minus your vacations) during

your first year in practice as a pharmacist, and ponder each dose slowly. (Say, each dose has a half-life of 3.5 days...hahaha! Don't worry, I'm not going to make you do pharmacokinetics, I promise!)

Last but certainly not least, the opinions expressed in this book are mine and mine alone, unless otherwise noted. My employer(s) and businesses may or may not share my opinions. My doses and/or opinions may or may not work for you. Take them with a grain of salt, and realize that they may not, in all cases, work for you. (Lawyers love a good disclaimer.)

Ready? Let's do this.

46 Doses of Advice



Thank the Universe

Assuming we are starting at the point of graduation, new job acquired, and licensure officially passed, if you haven't already, stop reading this book, go to the store, pick up a packet of at least 50 thank you notes, and start writing.

Thank your parents, friends, family, boss, professors, co-workers and anyone else who got you to the point of being a licensed pharmacist immediately. You did not get to where you are at this moment alone. Also, keep a stack of blank thank you notes on your desk somewhere, and make sure you're thanking someone in the universe each and every week at a minimum and day at a maximum if and when you can. Make gratitude a habit.

There is an art to writing thank you notes. It is also a practice that unfortunately is dying in this universe of ours, which frankly is sad. Don't be in the majority here—write thank you notes early, often, and even late if you have to. Conversely, keep the thank you notes you receive. I keep them in a special wall of my home office called 'The Wall of Fame' – and I've noted that other leaders in their industries keep notes of thanks as well in a place of honor in their workplaces. Gratitude is a good spirit to have around the office, especially during those less than great days at work.

I asked a regional pharmacy manager in a large retail chain in pharmacy how many follow up hand-written thank you notes he received in the past year of his recruiting. He replied about 1-3% of candidates actually send a handwritten follow up thank you note. But he followed up that statement with 100% of those individuals received job offers from the company. Furthermore, seven out of ten Ameri-

cans will open a handwritten envelope FIRST in their pile of mail.

Thank you notes are not just reserved for job interviews, either. If someone goes out of their way for you, or even gives you business (not just a job), send them a thank you. Does e-mail count? Not really. But if that is the only option you have to contact someone, it is better than nothing.

Also, this is an opportunity for you to share with the universe your next phase of life. Do you have business cards that you can include in your thank you notes? While some networking experts disagree with me (in that they think including a business card with a note is tacky), I respectfully disagree, simply because you never know when someone may need to get ahold of you—for personal or professional reasons. You need to make that process as easy and painless as possible. Include in your e-mail footer all of your contact information for the exact same reason—make it easy for people in the universe to connect with you. This allows for more opportunities and collaborations to come your way.

If your employer doesn't offer business cards, go to about.me. Set up a profile for yourself. Include something you'd like to share with the universe on your page. Next, go to moo.com or vistaprint.com and order business cards for yourself. Include your social media portals. Make it easy for people to contact you.

As the saying goes, "It is lonely at the top," I also think that there are also too few notes of thanks in this universe. Besides, I also think you get what you give, and said another way, Karma can be a &*(^! if you don't give back to the universe.

One other tiny bit for your consideration: even if you don't want to display your thank you notes, keep them for your hero file. I'll talk about this later.

If you're still reading this – you did stop and get your thank you notes written, right?

For more:

**Read [The Thank You Economy](#) – by Gary Vaynerchuk*

2



No Residency Required

Maybe you're reading this book because you're still a little perturbed you didn't match in a residency program right after pharmacy school. There are a limited number of residencies in the U.S. and not everyone is selected—which can be a crushing ego blow to many superstars in pharmacy. (Let's face it, you got into pharmacy school in the first place, so you probably don't manage failure very well to begin with, right?) What I'm about to say is controversial, but someone needs to tell you, because you may not hear it from any other source: you don't need a residency or a fellowship to be a rock star in the profession of pharmacy.

Let me explain.

I never did a residency. Well, I joke that my residency was in the 'School of Hard Knocks.' Even now that I've been teaching in higher education for seven years, I don't think that missing a residency has hurt my career in any way. In fact, if anything, it has actually helped me, because I've looked to enhance my expertise within pharmacy by becoming an "inside outsider," or someone who likes to bring the best hits from other professions back into the profession of pharmacy, rather than being an insider who has expertise deeply within one profession (and one profession only).

Fellowships are a cool alternative to a residency, but again, you don't need one to become a future leader within the profession. Besides, if you were like me and graduated from pharmacy school with

debt, you are going to have the chance at paying back your loans at a much faster rate than a resident or fellow making one-third to one-half of what a full-time pharmacist makes in salary. Debt is something I want you to work at getting rid of as quickly as possible (and more on that later).

Also, I still don't buy into the idea that all residents really get the shot at exposure to three years' worth of career development in one year, as a lot of the resident gurus state. One person owns your career development, and that person is not the residency coordinator at the hospital you were hoping to get into as a resident. The person who owns your career—residency or no residency—is y-o-u. So, if you're sour grapes on the residency thing, thank your lucky stars you didn't get one right now. Seriously, pat yourself on the back. Because, you can still do everything a resident can do, you're just going to need to be your own residency coordinator.

If you're still hopeful, and you still really, really want a residency, you can always try for a new, unaccredited residency (there is a risk involved in an unaccredited residency, but the good news here is that you can help build it from scratch), or go outside the match and look at residencies outside of the match process (like Indian Health Services, VA, in Medication Therapy Management, or the Public Health Service as just a few examples). Last, you could REALLY go out of the box and help build a new residency at that site you did an APPE rotation at and loved, but they didn't yet offer a residency. There are hospital gigs that shockingly don't require a residency too, if you'd like to fall back on a job. Also, you can always try out for a residency later in life too; however, be warned that once you've had a taste of the six-figure-full-time-pharmacist-salary, it will be very hard to go back to five figures. (You were warned.)

Also, this may be controversial as well, but I would NOT advise going back to school and getting another degree just because you

didn't match a residency program. You need to get out into the real world of work for a couple of years and learn how to be a pharmacist. That is education you're only going to get from actually working as a pharmacist—you can't get it from a book, a program, or a class. Give your brain and wallet a break, and get to work for a while. We'll discuss graduate school later on in this book.

3



Get a Personal Professional Liability Insurance Policy

When you were hired (or better yet, during the interview), one of the questions you asked was, "How much liability insurance do you offer per pharmacist?" right? If you didn't, right now would be an excellent time to ask. While most employers offer some coverage, it's probably not enough.

Lawyers are expensive. And as much I hope that you never need one, you do need good insurance to cover your mistakes. (And you will have mistakes, we all do, no one is perfect.) Our lack of perfection is the onus for telling all my fellow pharmacist and pharmacy-student-kind that they need their very own professional liability insurance policies.

This is really a non-negotiable. You buy your own homeowner's or renter's insurance, car insurance, and in some cases, life insurance, so why not own a professional liability insurance policy too? Besides, as I write this, it is tax deductible (if you itemize), and you'll be looking for tax deductions once you start making great salaries. This is common sense, and I hope you're far, far ahead of me on this one, but if not... stop reading this book and go pick up a policy. Pronto.

About the Author

Erin L. Albert, MBA, PharmD, JD is a pharmacist, entrepreneur, writer, attorney, assistant professor, and the Director of Continuing Education & Preceptor Development at Butler University College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences. She is also the founder of two companies, Pharm, LLC and Yuspie, LLC. Erin has developed and written several books on pharmacy practice, entrepreneurship, law, and regional community development. Her books have been featured in *The Huffington Post*, NPR, BBC, Entrepreneur.com, DanPink.com, *Forbes*, and *The New York Times*. She has also written for several regional and national online and news outlets, and was interviewed regarding pharmacy practice in *The Wall Street Journal*. She has previously worked in community practice pharmacy, pharmacy management, and in the pharmaceutical and biotechnology industries in various capacities—medical affairs, clinical research operations, marketing, and as a medical science liaison.

More on the author can be found at erinalbert.com.