

Inaugural Address of Steven G. Avey Award: Norrie Thomas, PhD

Introduction

The Foundation for Managed Care Pharmacy confers the Steven G. Avey Award upon an individual who has demonstrated sustained, exemplary and distinguished service to the profession of managed care pharmacy over the course of a lifetime. Avey award winners are professional role models, whose contributions have advanced the profession in clinical and administrative practice.

The Award is appropriately named for Steven G. Avey whose contributions to the profession of pharmacy in general and to managed care pharmacy in particular are exceptional. Not only is Steve a disciplined practitioner dedicated to the enhancement of patient care, but his personal values embody integrity, transparency, cooperation, and good will. Fortunate are those whose lives have been touched by this gifted individual.

The 2010 Steven G. Avey Award recipient was Norrie Thomas in acknowledgement by her peers of her significant, continuing service in advancing both the practice of managed care pharmacy and the pursuit of leadership in healthcare delivery.

Dr. Thomas is recognized as an entrepreneurial leader in the field of managed care pharmacy. Her career reflects the initiation of innovative approaches to coordinating multiple decision makers whose efforts improve patient care through better use of pharmaceuticals. Her groundbreaking recognition of the capability of managed care pharmacy principles to enhance the delivery of health care services led her to co-found the Academy of Managed Care Pharmacy in 1989. Always a champion of the discipline, in August 2010 Dr. Thomas accepted the position as interim Chief Executive Officer of the Foundation for Managed Care Pharmacy. She is pursuing this assignment while simultaneously acting as a consultant with the University of Minnesota, College of Pharmacy's Center for Leading HealthCare Change as the project leader of the acclaimed series of programs for the managed care industry, "Dialogue in Managed Care Leadership." The third "Dialogues" will be in conjunction with the Minneapolis AMCP annual meeting in April 2011.

Dr. Thomas delivered this inaugural Steven G. Avey Award Lecture in conjunction with the 22nd Annual Meeting of the Academy of Managed Care Pharmacy on April 8, 2010 in San Diego, California.

Judith A. Cahill
Executive Director
AMCP

"N of 1, Footprints and Webs" Foundation of Managed Care Pharmacy

Norrie Thomas, Ph.D.
President, Manchester Square Group

There are times and places where words are not enough or sufficient to express the magnitude of "thank you". Thank you to be honored by my peers and thank you for allowing me to deliver the first of many, "Leadership Lectures".

When words are not enough to express feelings and gratitude, one needs to add music and drama. That is one of the reasons that I love the opera. Although I do not perform at the Metropolitan Opera in New York City, I do lead backstage tours, and get to see the way operas are performed. In fact I am such a lover of the opera and am backstage so often that I get to know the production

schedule for the new season before the New York Times. I love the opera. Opera allows the words, the drama, the music, the costumes and the production to become a stage for the expression of thoughts and feelings, so that a "thank you" can soar beyond the capacity of words.

Not to worry, I will not be singing a 30 minute speech on Leadership and Managed Care Pharmacy. We have all seen enough episodes of American Idol to know that desire cannot replace talent; although desire fuels talent. But, through the assistance of some creative and talented people at Risdall Advertising; I have produced a movie-video about leadership,

and managed care pharmacy; N of 1, Footprints and Webs. I know, there are some “nay sayers” in the audience that think managed care pharmacy is not the stuff of movies...not a Lord of the Rings...Mission Impossible...the DaVinci Code but then, I was born with a double dose of imagination; and imagination fuels creativity.

Other “nay sayers” will say she must be exaggerating...again. She certainly did not create a full length Hollywood movie- and they would be correct; it’s really a 120 second video about leadership and managed care pharmacy.

And yet, there is drama, there is a story...perhaps not the “Greatest Story Ever Told”, but still a great story, a story about us, everyone in this room, the story of the Academy of Managed Care Pharmacy: N of 1, Footprints and Webs.

Don’t expect me to tell you the ending, you have to wait until the end...but I will give you a glimpse of: No of 1; Footprints and Webs.

Leadership begins with “thank you”. I am sincerely grateful for this honor; awarded by my peers; the peers of the Academy of Managed Care Pharmacy. This award is a culmination of over thirty years of work and relationships that I have built in practicing the profession of pharmacy; even more important to me is thinking back to 1989 when eight Founders met to create the Academy: Pete Penna, Robert Navarro, Hank Blissenbach, John Cuifo, Jay Messeroff, Al Carver, Perry Cohen and me; we hoped that we were doing the right thing; we hoped that the profession of pharmacy would benefit from our actions; we hoped that we could create something bigger than each of us could create alone. Then an extraordinary thing happened... leadership happened. Because leadership is about leaders transforming their ideas into actions, actions that cause something extraordinary to happen...the Academy of Managed Care Pharmacy.

Leadership is about an individual; a sample size of one; an **N of 1**; an individual who has an idea about a legacy; something they want to build, something that will survive and leave an impact; a **footprint**, by bringing together a group of people with a shared goal, a shared vision who will weave a **web** of strength for others to lean against...a web of people...the Academy of Managed Care Pharmacy.

The Leader....N of 1

What is a Leader? A leader starts with one person, one pharmacist who believes that they can be successful in achieving a goal; someone who is not afraid of the strength of others but finds others with strength and builds an inclusive

organization. A leader is an N of 1; but not someone who covets their leadership position. A leader creates a place for the talent of others to expand.

To find strength in others and build on that strength takes vision and courage and belief in a purpose; these are very important traits of leadership: vision, courage, and purpose. However, leadership is not a set of character traits. It’s about getting extraordinary things done¹, and the Academy is an extraordinary organization.

The Footprint...A Legacy...an Action

You leave a footprint each time you take a step. Leadership is about making conscious decisions about the footprints you leave behind, to create a legacy. Leaders make decisions about their legacy, and organizations make decisions about their legacy: their legacy to their profession and their legacy to their members.

For many of us in the profession of managed care pharmacy, our work has been a place where life-long friendships have been forged. Our work has also offered an environment where our creative energies have been expressed by creating a new kind of pharmacy.

I had the opportunity to teach first year pharmacy students at Drake University last year. I found out some things about myself during this process; leaders need to reflect and learn to evaluate their skills constantly.

A good friend and colleague of mine, Lon Larson, died last year. I met him many years ago when we wrote one of the first books on managed care pharmacy. Lon loved teaching, and he was one of the first professors to support his students in the Foundation’s Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committee Competition. Lon Larson’s chemotherapy and radiation therapies were not allowing him to do what he loved, to teach the spring session of managed care pharmacy, so I offered to assist.

We decided to team teach the course. Lon loved his teaching so much that if his strength allowed, he wanted to be in class. It was great fun for me to be connected with my good friend, to reminisce about the “old days”; to talk about the purpose of life, and to be bound through our love of our profession.

When you think that pharmacy students have four years to learn everything they need to know to begin their profession, you look at the value of each word in your lecture with a sense of tremendous responsibility. I wanted these students to know that the profession of pharmacy is not static. It is not one set of skills that lasts a lifetime. When I was a first year

pharmacy student, when many of you were first year pharmacy students, managed care pharmacy did not exist. Leaders take their skills and seize opportunities, opportunities that lead to greatness.

For many of us our work in pharmacy managed care has been a way of life in which we were able to fulfill a sense of awe at being able to build and create a new expression of our profession. I wanted the first year pharmacy students to think about this sense of awe and profession; to know that their expression of pharmacy had not yet been created. It would not be created in the classroom, it would present itself to them, in an unexpected way, and they needed to be ready to seize the opportunity.

For me this sense of enthusiasm and inspiration for my work is the Academy of Managed Care Pharmacy. For these new students it may be something completely different. The point is to know that as pharmacists we have a responsibility, a contract, to find ways to improve health and medication use. Pharmacists have a responsibility outside of direct patient care, a social responsibility to address health related matters beyond providing medications. Pharmacists are advocates for improvements in the medication process.

What did I learn from teaching first year pharmacy students? What did I learn about leadership? I learned from Lon Larson that teaching is something you must love to do. Lon had a sense of awe about teaching the medication use process, the delivery and use of medications in society. While the pharmacist is not responsible for every decision made in the process, the pharmacist has a professional obligation to enhance the access, quality, and efficiency of medication use and to understand the ethical nature of that responsibility.

This sense of awe, this enthusiasm; this inspiration for our members and our profession; and this advocacy for patients means that you must love your profession. In 2008, I helped start the Founders Circle as part of a fundraising effort for the Foundation. I sent an email to Rusty Hailey and Cindy Pigg with some ideas and they said, "yes, let's go for it."

The success of this program has been wonderful. We invited AMCP members who had attended one of the first meetings in 1989 and 1990 and 1991 to become members of the Founders Circle by giving to the Foundation, and they did. Those early leaders said "yes" to Philanthropy.

Philanthropy comes from Greek *φίλος*, (love) and *άνθρωπος* (human being), meaning "to love the human being". Philanthropy is a way to "fall in love" with our profession

again; to restore that sense of awe, inspiration and enthusiasm and to remember what can be achieved.

The Founders Circle members bring not only financial support to the Foundation, they bring their leadership and commitment to the profession; and they form a web. We recaptured our collective sense of awe by remembering how important we all were in those beginning years of the Academy... We are and remain philanthropists...leaders who love the Academy.

Now back to the managed care pharmacy "movie." The actors are each of us, the drama is life and death, life-long friends who had a shared vision. Lon Larson and I wrote a book together, Pharmacy Benefit Management in 1994. After writing the book we went our separate ways, I went off to London; he continued his commitment to students. In 2009 we came back together just moments before the final chapter of his life was written. We laughed together; we worked together; and he taught me something about leadership. He taught me that the awe of purpose and mission cannot be lost; that the pharmacist's domain is the future.

Lon Larson died in May 2009. He was the N of 1. He left a legacy to his students. The web, came next, all of us in this room. Suzanne Blackburn, Lowell Anderson, David McLean, Nancy McGee, Brian Ressitier, Marsha Millonig, Kathi Russi, Cori Ofstead, and Cindy Pigg all traveled to Des Moines, Iowa in the middle of winter to be guest lecturers for Lon's class at Drake University. Many honors have been bestowed on Lon. He was a great pharmacist and a great leader. The Academy of Managed Care Pharmacy was there for him: a web of colleagues and leaders connected by a shared profession came one by one to teach for him when he could not. We took care of his students; we came to help and to share our knowledge; and mostly we let Lon know his belief in managed care pharmacy mattered. We could not change his illness, but we could let him know that our profession bound us. The "web" acknowledged his leadership, his legacy, and his students.

This is the stuff of operas.

The Web

Leadership is a relationship with people. Our strength is our members. We can't lose sight of this strength, nor can we take this strength for granted. Leadership searches for strength and has confidence in strength.

Creating leadership pathways for our members is an important way to secure the ongoing future of the Academy, and a focus that needs to be reinstated as a high priority.

Pharmacists contributed at strategic and business levels in the early growth of the managed care industry, and this led to career paths in the C-suite or the "Corporate Level". The C-Suite leaders of our industry are not as visible in the Academy as they once were, and we've lost a key component of our ability to lead and influence in the business environment and the national health care debate.

I believe that the future direction of AMCP should be focused on leadership. By using the AMCP network of people we become a powerful force for change and a voice for solutions. We need leaders that can be that voice because of their passion for this industry, their professional commitment to patient care, and their dignity and respect for our members. We need this voice even when we disagree. We need leadership that can create the awe and inspiration of creative solutions, leadership that is committed to finding opportunities for our profession to spearhead. The status quo will not get us where we need to be; the status quo did not create the Academy.

In my experience the most successful strategies are not long term plans or 300 page strategic reports. Strategic reports tend to have an internal focus and rely on bureaucracy. They are important in the running of an organization, but leaders do more. Leadership requires success.

Successful strategies transform vision into reality; leaders can communicate the vision and the reality in such a way that people see the path to success. It is important for our web to grow and be connected to other webs. Managed care affects all pharmacists and their patients; as the profession changes we need to collaborate in ways that will broaden our profile and influence and focus on the relationship between a pharmacist and his patient. I believe that the Academy should strengthen and expand its strategy of leading all pharmacy disciplines; community, hospital, institutional, long term care and many others. Our differences are minor compared to the strength of our combined message: pharmacists are primary care providers of medication therapy. The Academy has the opportunity to lead all pharmacists in achieving this goal...

To achieve success you need a lot of failures. The scientific process is only advanced by negating an hypothesis, finding some factor to be false. The only way we learn is by learning from mistakes. When you look at the life of many great people, their greatness becomes even more profound when you see their mistakes and how they adapted. The only difference between success and failure is that successful leaders don't allow failures to stop them. Leaders are fearless. Leadership is expecting the unexpected and adapting.

It is these difficult situations in life that prepare you for leadership. When I look back over my career there were many disasters, many unexpected turns. Some could have been avoided, some were just fate. But in every case I can say that leadership is not avoiding disasters. Leadership is treating disaster and success as the imposters they both are. That is a line from one of my favorite poems, *IF* by Rudyard Kipling. "If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster, and treat those two imposters just the same." Leadership is about knowing what you want to accomplish, not measured by a compliment or an award, but by your own measure. What you want to accomplish: it is all about an N of 1 with a goal, with a measured footprint, and a legacy accomplished with a web of people; the support of colleagues.

I've adopted a few guiding principles to achieving my goals from various philosophers. They have helped me to decode leadership, to understand the way forward. There are four important steps to accomplishing your goals. The first is to write them down. You need skills and talent to be able to articulate those goals and understand how to express your ideas to others.

The second step is to dream; to dream you need imagination and exaggeration. The third step is to "act as if"; to believe in your goal so that you actually act as if you have already accomplished it. This takes courage, vision and bit of eccentricity, and you need to walk a fine line with this step. There is a short distance between "acting as if" and schizophrenia. I handled this step quite well since I was a drama major until I fell in love with chemistry. Two strange passions, but like I said, you need a bit of eccentricity to succeed. You have to be different.

The final step in achieving any goal is to say thank you; thank you to the disasters and triumphs, thank you to the people that helped, thank you to the people that didn't; and finally thank you to yourself for having the courage to try.

So what's the future? Over the next five years there is one major factor affecting managed care pharmacy; the economy.

I worked in London, England for many years. It was a grand experience for me but not without its challenges. I created a consulting company called the Manchester Square Group (MSq). It is a nice coincidence to be able to deliver this speech in the Manchester Ballroom. I made many lifelong friends while working in London and one of them is here today, Dr. Anne Rodway, a retired physician and executive in the National Health Service who frequently spoke on the BBC regarding medical issues.

During a break from my consulting work I spent a sabbatical semester at the London School of Economics; it was a time for me to reflect and build again the concepts that have driven many of my ideas. One of the most interesting seminar discussion sessions I participated in discussed the value of medication therapy in countries with less capital than the United States. The economic value of treating disease with medications becomes a much different equation when society does not have clean water, food or jobs.

Another seminar studied the influence of government, politics, peace and war on the choices for healthcare policy decision making in Europe. To understand the healthcare policies of Europe one needs to understand history and the history of war and peace. As part of my sabbatical, and because I love to read, I spent hours in the Imperial War Museum reading room studying WWII. Not a usual topic of study for a pharmacist. But studying war was essential if you wanted to understand the decisions made after the war, decisions that impacted healthcare policy and the way medication use is delivered in Europe.

During those many hours in the Imperial War Room reading room, I read many books about Winston Churchill, a great and complex leader. The experience of WWII shaped the healthcare policies of the United Kingdom, so understanding these experiences was important for my study. So I read about Winston Churchill when he was Prime Minister of England during WWII. One interesting story stood out for me. During that time in history, Mr. Churchill gave two books to everyone in the armed forces in 1939-1945: two books to read and to take with them as they went off to war and faced death at Dunkirk, Omaha Beach, Normandy, and the Battle of the Bulge. Two books to lay beside the rifle and the grenade; two books to read so that they would understand why this war was being fought.

What were those two books?

One book was one you might expect...the Greatest Story Ever Told: the St. James version of the Bible.

What was the second book? It was the End of Economic Man by Peter Drucker. When I read this I thought I must be reading a mistake. I had never heard of that book, although I had read many books by Peter Drucker, as many of you have. Peter Drucker is the father of leadership and management books and business concepts like management by objectives. I could not understand why Winston Churchill would think that this book The End of Economic Man could be so

important. I immediately bought the book and could not stop reading.

The message from the End of Economic Man is complicated and political; not the stuff of dinner speeches. But what the book said to me was that economic crisis left untended, unmanaged, without leadership, without vision and accountability to the future leads to immeasurable disaster. Fast forward to 2009. Leadership is not just a word, leadership is so important that it cannot be lost. It is a book about Europe and gives a framework for understanding the healthcare choices Europeans made. The United States will remain driven by different economic tensions, but studying the effects of these foundations on the structure of pharmacy care was extremely valuable to me. The book connected pharmacy to a broader world, broader than the healthcare industry. Pharmacy is about people; pharmacy is about leadership. Leadership in healthcare is absolutely essential for the future of pharmacy and medication use. These are exciting times for our profession. Because of our knowledge, experience, training, and readiness for leadership we can seize the opportunity, fill the void, and take our place in driving change.

But how, how can pharmacists take center stage for driving change? We have permission to lead, we have the responsibility to lead, and we need to "act as if".

Which brings me back to Peter Drucker and the End of Economic Man; we need to look at our relationship with the people we serve...the patients; we need to satisfy current demands, but have our eye on creating markets for new choices.

Don't aim low...exaggerate, start new companies. I am starting a new company - a grand idea to bring advanced software technology to the practice of pharmacy with my two colleagues, Dave Teckman and Peter Greenwald.. My daughters, Evy Wilkins and Tia Wilkins, are starting new companies this year too; one in Silicon Valley and one in fashion design. Creating new markets is a fast track to leadership, and we are a family of entrepreneurs. Creating markets forces you to understand the people you serve but have your eye on what can be achieved. Creating markets is a way to lead, and it is AMCP's forte. We did it once, everyone in this room; we created the PBM industry, and future success is heavily weighted to past success.

Our industry's challenges will be great and multifaceted. The challenges to manage costs and improve quality will stretch our creative processes; old ways of doing business will be replaced with solutions that we must create. And the

boundaries effecting managed care pharmacy will expand to things we never expected.

We will need to be ready with creative solutions guided by experience, tempered with the courage to believe in our abilities to undertake new and uncharted responsibilities, supported by a web of lifelong friends and prepared for extraordinary things to happen: the chance to be a leader, the chance to leave a legacy, and the chance to work with an exceptional community of colleagues...the Academy of Managed Care Pharmacy.

So let the opera begin....

Lights, CameraAction...

- Write
- Dream
- "Act as if",
- and most importantly give Thanks...Thank YOU

I would like to thank the Risdall Medical Group for their generous support and creativity in creating the following video:

www.RisdallMedicalGroup.com/ThomasLeadershipLecture

Reference

1. Kouzes, J.M. and Posner, B.Z., "The Leadership Challenge", 3rd Edition, 2003 John Wiley & Sons.