



Letter to the Editor

ENGAGE

There comes a time in one's life where a decision to pour your life out to and for something is all you have to do. Delivering health care is fast transforming in more or less the same way as all other industries. The systems, platforms, requirements, technical skills and competencies as well as polity and legal framework around how things ought to be done is rapidly changing faster than we can blink. You need not be caught off-guard debating how things used to be. You cannot afford to be found wanting. What got us here will not take us there. This means there is a need for a mental and leadership shift. The International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) launched and published 21 the FIP Pharmaceutical Workforce Development Goals (PWDGs) that seeks to align pharmacy with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, thus positioning pharmacists not as local but global champions towards "transforming global pharmacy"¹ These goals have the potential to position a pharmacist beyond currently recognised power, in primary healthcare, hospital care, training and research, business and other innovative healthcare delivery approaches in existing and emerging markets. However, this will require a generation of bold, decisive leaders and innovators who are ready to go beyond the call of duty to secure a seat in the king's table. Martin Luther King Jr summed this up in saying "if a man hasn't found something he will die for, he isn't fit to live." Well, that's rather graphic, isn't it? Maybe if I put it in the poetic words of spiritual activist and author, Mariane Williamson made famous by Nelson Mandela it will make sense:

*Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.
Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.
It is our light, not our darkness
That most frightens us.
We ask ourselves
Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?
Actually, who are you not to be?
You are a child of God.
Your playing small
Does not serve the world.
There's nothing enlightened about shrinking
So that other people won't feel insecure around you.*

*We are all meant to shine,
As children do.
We were born to make manifest
The glory of God that is within us.*

*It's not just in some of us;
It's in everyone.*

*And as we let our own light shine,
We unconsciously give other people permission to do the same.
As we're liberated from our own fear,
Our presence automatically liberates others.²*

Given the landscape of the practice of pharmacy, taking a back seat will not help. Deciding to take to social media to lament the ordeal you are facing with like-minded complainants will not open a door for help. Instead, it may keep you locked in a depressed and unsatisfied room of disappointment when you realise that nothing changes when you don't change and change them. How pharmacists responded to the changes brought about by COVID-19 is a clear indication of our current mental framework. How we will continue to dispense ourselves over the next decade will depend on the price we are willing to pay now. The price to lead change or the price to maintain the status quo have been set on the table for the profession to choose what befits our role, expertise and relevance.

This letter is a call to action, to go to the lab, to your research office, dispensary, ward, classroom, consulting room with a different mental makeup of one who unapologetically owns the space and formally and solidly build on ground and a pharmaceutical expert, one whose role forms the backbone of healthcare. One who delivers healthcare as a calling with reward. Engage the debate in all platforms that offer your voice an audience that is able to take the action in heed of your plea. The time is now. The time is now for pharmacists, individually or collectively to lead, in the space where you are. Be the change you want to be.

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References

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2. Williamson M. A return to love: Reflections on the principles of "a course in miracles." Our deepest fear. HarperCollins; 1996.