Hi Tech

How I Joined the Pharmacy Technician Profession

Feature Article
by Clara Gary, Pharmacy Technician

Hi Techs!

I am interested in your story of how or why you joined the pharmacy technician profession. I will start by sharing my story with you…

Twenty-nine years ago, I was a salesperson at the Eddie Bauer’s clothing store and after work one evening, I went to have lunch with my best friend at her new job as a pharmacy technician at Northwestern Memorial Hospital (NMH). I was welcomed into the pharmacy by her co-workers Penny, Brenda, Lareese and the pharmacist, Greg.

After the stressful world of retail, I found the professional atmosphere at NMH inspiring. The pharmacy was filled with very knowledgeable people, who treated each other with respect and truly worked as a team. As I sat quietly trying to stay out of the way, I watched as several nurses and doctors came in and out of the satellite requesting medication doses for their patients, seeking assistance with placing orders or changes, or just asking a question.

The knowledge and skill of the pharmacist and technicians impressed me. They all worked seamlessly, led by Greg and his right hand Reese, as they fondly called him. Reese would fill a prescription or draw up a dose and pass it to Greg to check, and he would hand it to the nurses on their way out of the pharmacy to see the patient and administer the dose. The technicians triaged phone calls from residents or other staff members, and only handed calls to Greg that required a pharmacist's clinical judgement. The technicians supported the pharmacist but they collaborated with each other to make the pharmacy run accurately and efficiently.

It was a beautiful thing to see! I understand that sounds corny but after working in jobs where there was a lot of back-stabbing or with people with a ‘crabby’ mentality, it was very refreshing. So this was my introduction to the Pharmacy Technician profession.

So after visiting 1 or 2 times, being around these people and observing this consistently, I exclaimed to Greg during one lunch hour “I can do this job!” Greg looked at me to make sure that I was serious and quickly gave me a pharmacy math quiz. Then he started asking me questions about metric measurements and because I was a Chemistry major in college I was able to pass his impromptu test. Then he said out loud, “Yes! I think you can too, and you should apply”!

So needless to say when the next job opening came up, with his encouragement I applied and was hired, thus beginning my career as a Pharmacy Technician. And something that I remember during my interview, which I
believe came from ICHP past president, the awesome Mike Fotis – he referred to pharmacy technicians as “paraprofessionals”, and this gave me a sense of pride that has stuck with me this entire time.

I am so happy with my decision to become a pharmacy technician and I would like to ask you to remember how or why you become a pharmacy technician too. If you would like to share your story, email me at cgaryl@uic.edu, and we will include them in upcoming issues of Hi Tech.