



Advancing Excellence in Pharmacy

KeePosted

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[View/Print This Issue](#)**Contents**[KeePosted Info](#)[President's Year-End
Message](#)[Directly Speaking:](#)**Columns**[Government Affairs Report](#)[Board of Pharmacy Update](#)[Membership Spotlight:](#)[New Practitioners Network](#)[Educational Affairs](#)[Elevate Your Meeting
Experience!](#)[ICHPeople](#)**Features**[Emergency Response Drill
through the Illinois Health-
System Pharmacy
Response Network
\(HSPRN\)](#)[Our New ICHP
Communications Manager](#)[Time to Celebrate for
Pharmacy!](#)[Announcing Big Changes –](#)**College Connection**[Chicago State University -
College of Pharmacy](#)[Midwestern University
Chicago College of](#)**New Practitioners Network
Meditation on Work-Life Balance** [Print This Article](#)

by Nathan Mitchell, PharmD - PGY2 Ambulatory Care Pharmacy Resident, Northwestern Medicine

As I am writing this article on what is literally my last day of residency, I cannot help but express the surreal feeling that I am experiencing. There is a strange, cathartic dichotomy where I am simultaneously excited, yet horrified at the prospect of the rest of my career. The future is both open and welcoming, yet wrought with uncertainty. I am lucky enough to have a job lined up, so the fear I have now is two-fold: one, I am worried that I will not perform well enough in my new position; and two, I am concerned that the first fear will be so overwhelming that I will lose any semblance of, what is called these days, a work-life balance.

Fear of failure is something with which we all struggle. Something almost universal that I love about our profession is how much we care. We care for our patients. We care for our students. We care for the field of medicine and research. Our passion is part of what makes us such trusted and effective practitioners. It is natural, then, that along with such passion would come a fear of failure, a fear of not being able to succeed at the thing for which you have so worked hard. As I move forward into the next phase of my career, I am going to do everything that I can to be successful in my new position. My passion for patient care expects it, and my fear of failure demands it. What I worry about now is letting that fear control my life outside of work.

The whole concept of a work-life balance can seem like a myth at times. We are simultaneously told that we need to pace ourselves and add more work to our plates. It is as if the people who created the idea of the work-life balance forgot that time is a limiting factor. I have seen it too often; pharmacists well out of residency working resident-style hours and slowly going mad. The people who need a break the most are, ironically, the ones who get more added to their plates because they are the hardest workers.

I knew that residency would consume my life. I knowingly sacrificed my personal life these past two years because the reward was a more fulfilling career. It was truly a worthwhile sacrifice, and I would do it over again given the option. The problem is, here I am at the end, and I am worried that I do not know how to stop. I have spent two years thinking about very little other than my career, and now the prospect of having a life outside of work is thrilling but daunting. People ask me what I am going to do with my free time, and there are plenty of things I would love to do. I want to work out more, eat better, pick up the violin again, date again, and volunteer. These are lofty goals. Will I really be able to fit everything in while managing a demanding clinical pharmacist position?

Pharmacy

Roosevelt College of
Pharmacy

Rosalind Franklin University
of Medicine and Science
College of Pharmacy

More

Upcoming Events

Welcome New Members!

ICHP Pharmacy Action
Fund (PAC)

Officers and Board of
Directors

ICHP Membership
Application

Regularly Scheduled Network Meetings

Chicago Area Pharmacy
Directors Network Dinner
3rd Thursday of Odd Months
5:30pm

Regularly Scheduled Division and Committee Calls

Executive Committee
Second Tuesday of each month
at 7:00 p.m.

Educational Affairs
Third Tuesday of each month at
11:00 a.m.

Government Affairs
Third Monday of each month at
5:00 p.m.

Marketing Affairs
Third Tuesday of each month at
8:00 a.m.

Organizational Affairs
Fourth Thursday of each month
at 12:00 p.m.

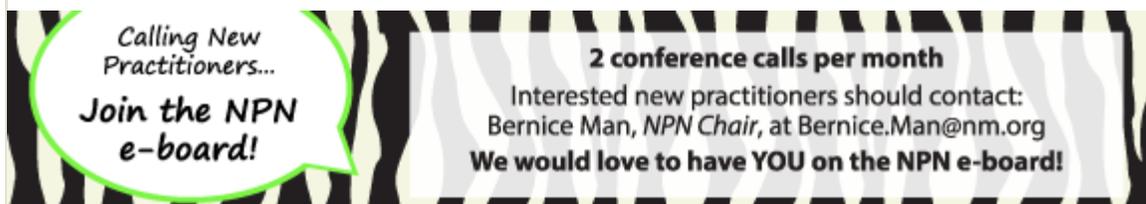
Professional Affairs
Fourth Thursday of each month
at 2:00 p.m.

New Practitioner Network
Second Thursday of each month
at 5:30 p.m.

The reality is we are not work-robots. We are in the business of taking care of other people, but the first people we need to take care of are ourselves. If we do not tend to our own mental health, how can we expect ourselves to sufficiently manage the health of our patients? It seems so easy to fall into the trap of working constantly and never taking a break. I expressed these concerns to a mentor of mine from this past year, and she said that I just have to learn to say no. If there is a concert I want to go to or dinner with friends or even if I just need a Netflix marathon at the end of the day, I am allowed to stop working and leave. It is not lazy or wrong to take care of oneself. I need to be mindful of what is on my plate and not take on more than I can chew.

Learning to say no is critical, not just for our life outside of work, but for our work as well. Time truly is a limiting factor, and the more we take on, the more overwhelmed we make ourselves, the more likely that our projects will suffer. It seems to me that it is better to do a reasonable number of things well than to do many things poorly. It can feel selfish and wrong to say no, but in actuality it is quite the opposite! By saying no, we are giving ourselves time to think, and we give our responsibilities the attention they deserve. We can actually be even better stewards of health by restricting what we take on at work.

This is much easier said than done and, personally, I will probably take a long time to figure out how to say no in a way that adequately achieves the balance between work and my outside life; however, art is something you practice, and the art of saying, "no" can be cultivated. We owe it to ourselves, and we owe it to our patients, to make it a priority.



Calling New Practitioners...
Join the NPN e-board!

2 conference calls per month
Interested new practitioners should contact:
Bernice Man, *NPN Chair*, at Bernice.Man@nm.org
We would love to have YOU on the NPN e-board!

Technology Committee

Second Friday of each month at
8:00 a.m.

Chicago Area Pharmacy Directors Network Dinner

Bi-monthly in odd numbered
months with dates to be
determined. Invitation only.

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