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Why the Profession of Pharmacy Will Never Reach It's Full Potential

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I was always very curious by what my father told me when I began my pharmacy degree, exactly 33 years after he started at the College of Pharmacy in Saskatoon. He loves being a pharmacist, loves pharmacy, was proud I was following his footsteps, but sent me to begin my journey with the harsh reality that the "good old days" of pharmacy may be gone for good, unless pharmacy stares down the challenges it faces, and wins decisively.

Well we haven't, and we likely never will.

I'm not saying this to be negative. I am absolutely thrilled that in a few months I will be a licensed pharmacist. I am eager to suck the marrow out of my chosen profession, one which I already love, and hopefully make a positive difference. It's just that sometimes the truth hurts, and we as students have to shoulder our fair share of the blame when it comes to determining who is at fault for running the profession into such a state of identity crisis.

Sure my father's generation were the businessmen/women who bled this profession dry charging huge dispensing fees, and in some cases providing little in return. Never for a moment did it dawn on them that perhaps they should market themselves, and capitalize on the wonderful reputation that pharmacists have earned

in the eyes of the public. Never did the idea of carving out niches in the health care sector, and creating a lasting role for pharmacists dawn on them. Never did the idea of cognitive services reimbursement hit our "advocacy" associations...it was just business as usual in the community setting, and in the basements of hospitals across the country. Everywhere, pharmacists across the country were rolling up their sleeves to lick, stick, count, and pour. Now they're all upset that the public think that's all we do.

WHEREVER DID THE PUBLIC GET THAT IDEA?

Why bother? The house is paid for, the cottage is paid for, the boat is paid for, and a membership at the posh golf and country club is paid for. What more could you ask for? Then things changed. The discount pharmacies moved in, 24 hour stores began to appear, mail order, hospital budgets began to shrink, and the fee was getting squeezed yearly by the provincial governments looking to save some cash, so they could blow it all in somewhere else.

There is no doubt that our soon to be colleagues did us very few favours, and left us with an incredible task of redefining our profession, and coming up with our own identity. It would be easy to blame it all on them, but

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