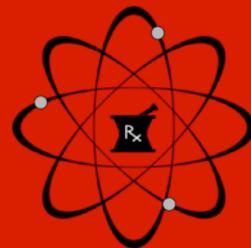


The Nuclear Monthly Missive



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A Different Path



His father was a pharmacist and the owner of the Petry Rexall Drug Store, a small-town community pharmacy. It was the kind of pharmacy that is almost a hidden gem in today's fast-paced world. The kind that is reminiscent of a bygone era with its soda fountain, fresh

cashew and mixed nuts case, and candy counter, but like today, the kind that boasted a pharmacist who was highly devoted to the people of his community. He grew up watching his father interact with and serve the healthcare needs of the citizens of North Judson, Indiana, and he knew that someday he, too, would become a pharmacist. He also knew that after high school, he would attend Purdue University; it was a family tradition. Like father, like son? Not entirely.

Neil Petry was on track to inherit the family drug store, by default, but this career path quickly changed during his first year of pharmacy school. Neil was sitting in an introductory pharmacy lecture at Purdue University when Stan Shaw

walked into the classroom holding a now-familiar device and an orange plate. "It was a radiation detection device -- a Geiger-Müller counter -- and a radioactive Fiesta ware plate." He continues describing the excitement and intrigue he felt as Dr. Shaw introduced the concept of radioactivity by moving this device towards the plate and hearing the clicks become more frequent as the device inched closer and closer to the oval orange source. "This is very interesting," he pondered. "I wonder what he does with that!" Stan Shaw's single lecture and time-tested demonstration was ultimately the beginning of Neil Petry's nuclear pharmacy timeline.

"I am constantly surrounded by highly intelligent people."

After completing pharmacy school in 1975, he decided to further his education with Purdue's Master of Science in Nuclear Pharmacy program, which included a one-year clinical residency at the Indiana University Medical Center. Through this track, he was involved with various research projects related to radiopharmacy, including compounding technetium-based kits that were not yet commercially available and performing endotoxin testing with rabbits, but he admits that his thesis on the "stability of stannous chloride solutions under various storage conditions using rubber stoppers" was probably not the most exciting of them all.



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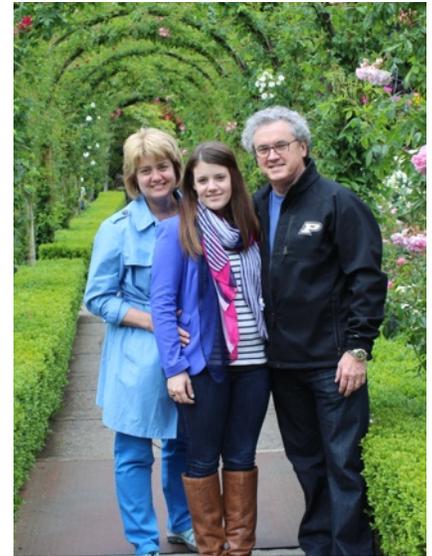
Suggestions for next month's newsletter? Contact Ashley Mishoe at AshleyMishoe@me.com.

Neil was anxious to start his new career, but he and his wife, Jodi, were geographically oriented to Indiana. However, he admits that they both understood that they might need to move away, and the question became, “How far?” “I got a map and got out my geometric compass . . . do you know what that is?” While holding back giggles, I am quick to clarify. “I’m sorry, but are we talking about an *actual* geometric compass or a hypothetical one? And, yes, I know what that is.” (He meant a device for drawing arcs and circles, i.e. an actual geometric compass.) He continues. “I got out my compass and marked a 600-mile circle around Indianapolis, Indiana.” Who knew mapping out a nuclear pharmacy career could be so (mathematically) simple?

To the north, but well within the circle, is Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and this is where he started his first job as a staff nuclear pharmacist. Neil worked at Nuclear Pharmacy Incorporated, a regional nuclear pharmacy, for 15 months before deciding that the job and the longer, bleak, negative-degree-laden winters were not ideal for him.

One day, he received a phone call from Captain William H. Briner recruiting him for a position at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina. Neil hints that Durham is conveniently located at the southeast border of the circle. He explains that his first experiences at Duke were much different from his first job, as they were more clinical and research-oriented and that the academic center was a much better fit for him. He reminisces about sitting in Captain Briner’s office, where he never had a true desk, but “a green office chair and a lap board.” In this office space, he listened-in on countless speakerphone conversations of Briner scientifically ~~tormenting~~ enlightening other researchers on errors in their latest work and clarifying regulatory compliance issues for Duke and other colleagues, and he remembers thinking, “I wish I could know that much someday.” Mr. Petry tells me that Captain Briner stressed the importance

of promoting nuclear pharmacy and networking within the profession, and because of this, Neil’s first year at Duke was also his first year of attending APhA meetings. He tells me that at his first meeting, he happened to be “at the right place at the right time” and was fortunate to meet two other pioneers in nuclear pharmacy, Dennis Swanson and Ron Callahan, both of whom are now among his close friends.



After five years at Duke, Neil accepted an opportunity to work at the University of Michigan alongside Dr. William Beierwaltes, the founder of the nuclear medicine program at the University of Michigan. Dennis Swanson was preparing to leave this position and recommended that Neil be considered. Also, this opportunity came largely from Neil’s association with Dr. Briner, who Dr. Beierwaltes knew well and greatly respected. In this new position, Neil held faculty and research appointments, and he served as the Director of the Nuclear Pharmacy program at the University of Michigan. Mr. Petry maintained these positions for fifteen years, during which time his clinical research focused on SPECT and PET radiopharmaceuticals for both diagnosis and therapy. Because Dr. Beierwaltes held the patents for radioiodinated MIBG compounds as imaging and therapeutic agents, Neil was also responsible for the regulatory oversight and manufacture of these investigational agents. At the time, these agents were distributed nationally to support clinical research under local, physician-sponsored INDAs. Because one of the the investigational sites was Duke University, Neil was able to continue collaborating with Captain Briner.

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“Do you ever get tired of winter?” Captain Briner asked when Neil answered the phone one brisk February morning.

Neil laughs and explains that this was code for “Are you ready to come back to Duke yet?” Captain Briner was preparing for retirement, and in 1998, Neil moved back to Durham where he accepted his current position as the Director of the Duke University Medical Center Radiopharmacy. Here, not only is he responsible for the functions of the hospital’s radiopharmacy services, but also, he serves on various institutional committees and facilitates a myriad of ongoing clinical research projects with nuclear medicine physicians, using both SPECT and PET radiopharmaceuticals. A current research focus for Neil is generating a program for the development of Ga-68-radiolabeled peptides for diagnosis and therapy.

Mr. Petry also serves as an assistant professor in the Department of Radiology and holds a faculty position with the Medical Physics Program. Because of his love for teaching, he also holds adjunct faculty appointments at Purdue University, Campbell University, UNC Chapel Hill, and Wingate University. Neil tells me he enjoys teaching and precepting students, and he stresses the importance in helping them figure out how nuclear pharmacy can fit into their future areas of practice. He freely admits that it is nearly impossible for him to overlook pharmacy students who are interested in exploring nuclear pharmacy as a career option, simply because he appreciates his past mentors, who invested their efforts to give him this very same opportunity. “Just paying it forward, you might say.”

His favorite aspect of his job is being able to work

in an academic medical center, a place where there are “fantastic opportunities to make significant contributions to healthcare.” “In this setting,” he tells me, “I’m constantly surrounded by highly intelligent people -- scientists, physicians, pharmacists -- making it easy to be kept humble.” Currently, Neil and his colleagues are investigating the use of I-124-labeled human serum albumin (HSA) PET and gadolinium DTPA MR imaging as a potential means to monitor the distribution, safety, and efficacy of therapeutic toxins infused directly into resected brain tumors by convection-enhanced delivery (CED). “My role has been to formulate and assure the pharmaceutical safety of the three-component preparation.” He adds that collaborating with these practitioners and researchers keeps him intrigued, as there is always something new to learn, some new question to answer, some arising healthcare challenge to address.

Mr. Petry’s involvement with pharmacy on a national level started with his job at Duke, and it has continued throughout his career. He tells me that APhA was his first professional involvement, and that he places high value on attending the meetings and actively participating in the Nuclear Pharmacy Practice SIG. Neil explains that not only are national meetings and conferences important for educational and professional development, but also, the networking opportunities within them are where he has met some of his closest friends, including neighbor (and local brewer), Dick Kowalsky.* Throughout his years as an APhA member, he has volunteered for multiple committees and has served as the Section Chair. Within SNMMI, he reviews abstracts with the Scientific Program Committee. He also currently serves as the Vice President for the Radiopharmaceutical Sciences Council, and next year, will serve as the Council’s President. Additionally, he authored the chapter on licensing and regulatory affairs in *Radiopharmaceuticals in Nuclear Pharmacy and Nuclear Medicine* and is an Editorial Board Member for the University of New Mexico’s Continuing Pharmacy Education Program.

Because of his commitment to pharmacy, Mr. Petry was designated as a Fellow of APhA and was the

2009 winner of the William H. Briner Distinguished Achievement Award in Nuclear Pharmacy Practice. When asked to reflect on these honors, he humbly tells me that “it was a privilege just to work with Captain Briner and learn from him, and it makes the award an even bigger deal.” He jokingly adds, “When you are fortunate to have worked with so many great people, something good is bound to rub off.” He continues describing how thankful he is for the opportunities he has been given -- opportunities to learn in different environments and opportunities to learn from pioneers within the profession.



“What do you like to do when you’re not working? And remember, being Dick Kowalsky’s designated BQCO (Brew Quality Control Officer) doesn’t count.” Neil enjoys gardening, exercising, and watching college sports (especially football and basketball). Naturally, his favorite college teams are associated with Purdue University, Duke University, and the University of Michigan. He also enjoys fishing, and traveling. “On an annual basis, I manage to get up to Boston to visit Mass. General and to go fishing with my good friend, Ron Callahan.” He adds that sometimes the two of them “even do some catching.” Although he has ventured as far as Hong Kong to teach radiopharmacy courses, he enjoys excursions with his family to the

mountains, the beaches of North Carolina, London, France, and “well, anywhere that’s away from my cluttered desk at work.” I think we can all agree with that.

To new practitioners and students, Neil says, “Opportunities will come, but you have to prepare and be ready for them.” And by this, he encourages you to prepare yourself for the path that is right for *you*. He urges you to seek mentors, to stay involved, to always search for something new to learn, and to make a point to network with other practitioners. He chose a different pharmacy career path than that of his father, but one that he is ultimately proud to be a part of.

Until next time,

Ashley Mishoe

*Dick Kowalsky was featured in August’s *Nuclear Monthly Missive*.

