

Hello & happy fall to all!

Here is the final newsletter for 2022. It's hard to believe there are only three more months in this year!

In this issue of the PRN, the University of Wyoming School of Pharmacy is focusing on Professional Identity Formation or PIF. This quarter we have a guest writer, Dr. Jeremy Vandiver, who is the School's Chair of the Department of Pharmacy Practice and a Clinical Associate Professor of Pharmacy Practice at Saint Joseph Hospital in Denver, CO. In this issue Dr. Vandiver explains what PIF is, why we should care about it, and how we can participate in the PIF process.

What is Profession Identity Formation?

Professional Identity Formation is "a representation of self, achieved in stages over time during which the characteristics, values, and norms of the profession are internalized, resulting in an individual **thinking, acting and feeling like a Pharmacist.**"¹

What Differentiates Professional Identity Formation from Professionalism?

Professionalism focuses on traits and outward (usually measurable) actions, while professional identity formation focuses on internalized (often unmeasurable) attitudes and beliefs. Professionalism is defined as an: "active demonstration of the traits of a professional...displaying values, beliefs and attitudes that put the needs of another above personal needs."² An example would be the white coat pharmacists wear which represents the outward appearance of a professional, but it doesn't represent the inward aspects of thinking and feeling like a pharmacist.

Why Should I Care About Professional Identity Formation?

There are a few reasons pharmacists/preceptors should care about PIF. Those include:

- Identity influences how a professional perceives, explains, presents and conducts themselves.³
- It is a key determinant of the scope and nature of an individual's work, and prioritization of their roles.⁴
- It shapes the mental well-being of the individual, and their satisfaction with their career and job positions.
- It helps advance the profession - Those that have fully embraced the identity of a pharmacist are more likely to push toward practicing at the top of their license.

How Can I Engage in the Professional Identity Formation Process?

Faculty and preceptors should be consistently engaging in professional identity reflection themselves. This has positive effects for students, but it also has positive effects for preceptors themselves. Those effects include

opening up insights that might assist with career development, as well as having a positive impact on day-to-day actions, patient care, and accountability.

Ask yourself, and your learners, some of the following questions:

- **What memorable moments have helped to shape my current identity as a professional?**
 - Put more simply, was there a moment or experience you can recall where you first truly "felt" like a pharmacist/clinician/educator/researcher?
- **Which patient, mentor, colleague, or community has most prominently influenced my professional identity?**
- **What aspects of your existing personal identities (e.g. race, ethnicity, sex, gender, religion, education, income level, etc.) do you feel most influences your professional identity?**

Being a good role model to your student learners is one way to demonstrate and engage in PIF. This can include:

- Modeling an open-minded and malleable approach to medicine and patient care.
- Modeling behaviors in taking ownership for mistakes made.
- Avoid leaning on external justifications when things go wrong.
- Being willing to admit mistakes and move on with what is best for the patient into the future.
- Discussing openly how your perceptions and approaches have changed over time as you have learned new information.
- Being aware of the cognitive dissonance that students are likely to experience when they transition from classroom-based learning to real-world learning in experiential settings. Knowing about these can help your students better navigate through them.

Examples of Common Cognitive Dissonances Students May Encounter in Experiential Settings

- Students are trained to practice at the top of a pharmacy license, however some rotation and job activities may not allow a student to do so
- Learners may have a strong desire to pursue a career that emphasizes dispensing, only to feel that this is not valued by a program, organization, or profession that emphasizes rapid expansion of clinical roles
- Lag-time- We have a tendency to lean on therapies we have seen work in the past, and we are slow to transition to newer modalities
- Patient-provider disagreement- Patients often have full competency to make their own care decisions, and they have the right to refuse interventions, even if strongly advocated by a healthcare provider
- Social injustices- Observing the often limited treatment options for patients from low socioeconomic positions (especially if uninsured) despite an identity of caring for all individual equally regardless of race, gender, income, etc.
- Health-system- Believing that you are working within one of the greatest healthcare systems in the world, only to observe the siloed nature of the U.S. health system (seeing patients struggle to coordinate vital care, prolonged hospital stays due to inability to acquire certain medical equipment outpatient, etc.)

If you are interested in learning more about PIF, here are a couple of recommended resources:

- AACP (www.aacp.org/article/professional-identity-formation)
 - Literature
 - Webinars
- [PIF Episodes](#) on Pharmacy Forward Podcast

References used for this article

1. Cruess RL, Cruess SR, Boudreau JD, Snell L, Steinert Y. Reframing medical education to support professional identity formation. *Acad Med.* 2014; 89: 1446-51.
2. APhA-ASP/ AACP COD Taskforce. *AJPE* 1996; 60:26-28S. *AJPE* 2000;40:96-102
3. Cruess SR, Cruess RL. Chapter 17: The Development of Professional Identity. In: Swanwick T, Forrest K, O'Brien BC, eds. *Understanding Medical Education*. John Wiley & Sons, Ltd; 2018: 239-254.
4. Cantillon P, Dornan T, De Grave W. Becoming a clinical teacher: identity formation in context. *Acad Med.* 2019; **94**: 1610-1618.

We hope you have enjoyed learning more about PIF and its important role in pharmacy. Thank you, Dr. Vandiver, for contributing to the PRN!

Enjoy the beautiful autumn weather & colors,
The University of Wyoming Experiential Program

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