

Merriam-Webster defines a mentor as, “a trusted counselor or guide” or as a “tutor or coach”. Being a mentor to students is something many preceptors aspire to, and it is something that Dr. Lesley Liebig has already achieved. Lesley was selected as one of two Preceptors of the Year for the 2021-22 academic year for the University of Wyoming School of Pharmacy (UWSOP). She precepts students at Banner Medical Group Ambulatory Clinics in both Loveland and Ft. Collins, CO. Her passion for her profession and teaching the next generation of pharmacists does not go unnoticed by her students. Students consistently comment on Lesley’s ability to care for both her patients and students and that she makes students feel like a colleague and a true member of the Ambulatory Care team.

This is not the first time Lesley was recognized for her outstanding mentoring skills. She was nominated for Preceptor of the Year while at the Order of St. Francis Medical Center in Peoria, IL where she worked as a hospital pharmacist. Lesley has been precepting students for at least 12 years as either the preceptor of record or working with other preceptor’s students. She has been a preceptor for the UWSOP for the past four years and has been nominated for Preceptor of the Year all four years.

Lesley sees herself as a coach to her patients, showing them how to check blood sugars or encouraging them to take their medications appropriately, and she does the same for her students. She does this by discussing the many opportunities available to them as pharmacists. Lesley remembers when she was a student and how at times she felt intimidated to ask questions. Therefore, she encourages her students to ask questions, not only about their clinical experiences but also about the profession of pharmacy. Lesley’s openness and interest in her students is something that is not missed by her students. Almost all of her students comment on how much she cares about them and how she works to ensure she is teaching them as much as possible about ambulatory care pharmacy. They really appreciate how she treats them as colleagues and values their input. One student commented, “I am so glad I did this rotation, as it really rejuvenated my motivation for clinical pharmacy.”

Treating students as colleagues truly has a big impact on them. Lesley strives to make students feel like they are her colleagues by reminding them that her patients are also their patients. She has her students work up patients, see patients, make therapy recommendations, etc. which in turn motivates and involves students throughout the rotation. This approach is especially helpful when students are not engaged or do not see the rotation applying to their future careers. With these type of students, which are often fourth year students who are at the end of their final year, she highlights how experiences from the rotation will influence the area of pharmacy the student is interested in pursuing. She tries to communicate this as early in the rotation as possible, so that student engagement lasts throughout the rotation and motivational issues do not arise.

Being yourself and using your strengths and best qualities to make the most impact on students is Lesley’s approach to being a preceptor. For example, she conducts topic discussions in a question and answer format that is more informal, which helps students feel more comfortable

and engaged in the topic. She also makes sure her students feel welcomed on the first day of the rotation by introducing them to all the staff and medical professionals at the clinic. That way, students know whom they will be working with, and the students know that everyone in the clinic knows who they are and why they are there. Lesley also takes the time to mentor and prepare students for the activities students will be involved in while at the clinic. She conducts mock patient interviews where she is the patient and the student practices talking to her prior to them meeting with the patient. She has them practice many other scenarios, too, such as point of care testing. This helps students feel more confident when interacting with patients. She also tries to have students work with other professionals and staff at the clinic so students can see how everyone is involved in patient care, and so they can learn from others.

Lesley uses her past and current experiences to help students learn there are many opportunities for them in the world of pharmacy. Lesley graduated from the University of Nebraska Medical Center in 2006 and then went on to have many different opportunities in pharmacy. She worked at CVS in Austin, TX right after graduating from pharmacy school and then went on to work as a hospital pharmacist in both Danville, KY and Peoria, IL. She is currently a Board Certified Pharmacotherapy Specialist working in an ambulatory care setting. Knowing that students have a fresh, new perspective about pharmacy, she capitalizes on that to encourage them to pursue their passions and interests. She often hears from former students who reach out to her to let her know the jobs they acquired and how she helped give them the confidence to pursue that job. Now that is the definition of a true mentor!