

HARVEY A.K. WHITNEY LECTURE

The art of growing professionally

JOHN W. WEBB

Abstract: The paths for professional development are described using past recipients of the Harvey A. K. Whitney Lecture Award as examples.

Past recipients were able to improve their performance by accepting the help of others, including their families. Most of these individuals were guided by mentors who taught them how to think and supported their character. Their growth was enhanced through memberships in professional associations. As members of regional and national organizations, they were able to observe pharmacy practice outside their own communities. An attempt to grow professionally is in effect a search for excellence. One way that past recipients achieved excellence was by

participating in continuing education. One of the most important factors contributing to their professional growth was their relationships with other people. Hospital pharmacists have been influenced by such persons as Harvey A. K. Whitney, Donald Francke, Donald Brodie, and Evelyn Gray Scott.

Past recipients of the Harvey A. K. Whitney Lecture Award have exemplified professional growth.

Index terms: American Society of Hospital Pharmacists; Education; Harvey A. K. Whitney Lecture Award; History; Organizations; Pharmacists; Pharmacists, hospital; Professionalism

Am J Hosp Pharm. 1986; 43:1923-6

Recipients of the Harvey A. K. Whitney Lecture Award have the privilege of talking on a topic of their choice. With your indulgence, I would like to spend the next few minutes talking about you.

You are all aware of the polls showing that pharmacists are highly respected by the public. If that were a recording, you could listen to it for hours and even play it for your friends. However, on the flip side it seems that no matter which journal you pick up, it will have at least one article urging you to be better. By repeated exposure to such reproofs, it is easy for us to develop a collective guilt. This may explain why one psychiatrist observed that pharmacy leads the health professions in self-denigration. By our own standards, we are never satisfied with our performance.

While everyone is happy to tell you to be better, few tell you how. One of the basic rules of performance reviews is to recommend specific actions. We are all sophisticated enough to know this, but if you were to review your professional performance, what specific actions would you recommend for

your own personal growth? Play with this thought: Suppose you had the responsibility of doing performance reviews for Whitney Award recipients. Would your recommendations for them be similar to those you made for yourself? It has been my good fortune to have met each one of them. I can tell you some of the actions they took, and you can see how yours compare.

Accepting Help from Others

These individuals were willing to accept help from others. The most obvious is family support. Those of you who were at last year's banquet may remember that Fred Eckel expressed this in his closing remarks. I am not as disciplined as Fred; I cannot wait until the end. I would like to pause right here to thank my wife and family for the support they have given me through the years. In my innocent youth, I thought all families gave support, but I have sadly watched more than one talented person waste years in hibernation before



John W. Webb was Director of Pharmacy at Massachusetts General Hospital from 1959 until his retirement in 1983. After receiving Bachelor of Science and Master of Science degrees from the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy in 1949 and 1951, respectively, Webb was Director of Pharmacy at Hartford Hospital and worked at the University of Connecticut before returning to Massachusetts General Hospital in 1956 to become Assistant Director.

He also held teaching appointments at Northeastern University School of Pharmacy and Allied Health Professions and at Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Allied Health Sciences. He was Director of the Graduate Program in Hospital Pharmacy at Northeastern for 20 years. In 1985, Northeastern established the John W. Webb Visiting Professorship in his name.

Webb is the author of numerous contributions to the pharmaceutical literature and has been especially interested in infusion systems and drug distribution systems. In the 1960s, he described a MOSAICS drug distribution system, which was one of the early systems for getting pharmacists into patient-care areas. He also noted in the 1960s the potential cost-saving capabilities of computers in hospital pharmacies.

A long-time member of ASHP, Webb served as Vice President of the Society in 1962-63 and as a member of the Board of Directors in 1965-67. He also served as president of the Massachusetts Society of Hospital Pharmacists and the New England Council of Hospital Pharmacists. Additional memberships include the American Pharmaceutical Association, Kappa Psi, Rho Chi, and the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP).

their spouses and families came to realize the need for professional growth.

Next, most Whitney Award recipients had a mentor. A mentor will advise and guide you, show you short cuts, and help you to interpret the information that repeatedly inundates you. This person will teach you how to think properly, help you shed much of your provincial thinking, and support your moral character. Harvey A. K. Whitney was a mentor to Donald Francke; in turn, Francke was a mentor to other pharmacy leaders, such as Grover Bowles, Clifton Latiolais, and George Phillips. Donald Brodie and Herbert Flack are other examples of outstanding mentors.

Those who find a good mentor are fortunate; I had two, Ellsworth T. Neumann, M.D., an outstanding hospital administrator, and John T. Murphy, one of America's leading hospital pharmacists. Dr. Murphy was also Louis Jeffrey's preceptor.

Dr. Murphy was repeatedly a candidate for the Whitney Award, but he always withdrew his name from nomination because the recipient of the honor was required to give a talk. As I stand in front of this august body, it is easy for me to understand his thinking. Dr. Murphy's reluctance to speak before large groups kept him from being duly recognized. I would like to accept this award in his memory.

Growth by Association

It has been stated that one grows by association with something bigger than oneself. Whitney Award recipients have a history of associating with professional organizations. They must have heard the same remark that you and I have heard, "What can they do for me?" In addition to the obvious educational programs, societies offer committee members and officers the opportunity to gain experience in group dynamics and public speaking, to improve social graces, and to exchange ideas and information with colleagues.

Over 100 years ago, a few wholesalers and drug-store owners established The Boston Druggists Association. It now includes educators, hospital pharmacists, members of the board of pharmacy, and representatives from industry. Socializing with pharmacists other than those in your specialty is a pleasant way to avoid professional myopia. The current president of the group is William Gouveia, our new ASHP Board member.

Participating in regional and national organizations gives you a chance to see how the profession is practiced outside your local community. Not too many years ago, I attended a meeting in a country where hospital pharmacists worked only on weekdays from 9 to 5. I was shocked to hear one of the speakers tell the audience that plans were afoot to bring 24-hour services, women, and generic drugs into pharmacy.

It is good to get a shock on occasion, for otherwise you become mentally lazy and take the familiar for granted. For example, we accept as a norm what women have contributed to hospital pharmacy. Some, like the feisty Evelyn Gray Scott, the exquisitely organized Gloria Francke, and the lovable late Sister Gonzales, have been Whitney Award recipients. In 1984, Mary Jo Reilly proved that the movement continues. We should also acknowledge contributions by others, such as Marianne Ivey and Judith Patrick Ronshagen.

Pursuing Excellence

In 1983, I was in China as a member of an i.v. therapy delegation. During the show-and-tell sessions, nurses would swarm around us because they had never seen plastic bags and tubing or disposable needles. We take them for granted, but I still remember the excitement of sitting in as my predecessor, John Murphy, worked with a man who was developing disposable needles. Unfortunately, the developer lost his personal fortune before the needles were perfected. Obviously, the pursuit of excellence is not kind to everyone.

You could commiserate with the early Whitney Award recipients who lived in a period of permanent austerity. Health care had a layered structure, and there were daily attempts to find funds to treat the indigent sick. The searches were not always successful. It is some kind of social commentary that the American public had television years before it had Medicare.

An attempt to grow professionally is in effect a search for excellence. Perfection is sometimes mistaken for excellence. In striving to become perfect, people become discouraged, for they can never be satisfied with their performance. With time, this search for perfection leads to burnout. In the March 1986 issue of the *American Journal of Hospital Pharmacy*, Robert Williams said, "The pursuit of perfection is frustrating, neurotic, and a terrible waste of time. The pursuit of excellence is gratifying, healthy, and productive." Williams's article¹ is recommended reading for everyone and should be mandatory reading for all who are interested in effective leadership.

In industry, IBM is frequently cited as the hallmark of excellence. Many, including people who work for IBM, believe that the company's most important asset is its respect for the individual. All managers pay lip service to this philosophy, but under duress it may well be forgotten. This reminds me of a prizefighter who gets hurt and forgets his fight plan and all his hours of training. If the fighter does not get things back into focus quickly, he will lose the contest.

Although diagnosis-related groups and fiscal restraint have provided new opportunities for pharmacists, the most common complaint I hear from

Harvey A. K. Whitney Lecture Award

Past Recipients

1950	W. Arthur Purdum
1951	Hans T. S. Hansen
1952	Edward Spease
1953	Donald E. Francke
1954	Evelyn Gray Scott
1955	Gloria N. Francke
1956	George F. Archambault
1957	Sister Mary John, R.S.M.
1958	Walter M. Frazier
1959	I. Thomas Reamer
1960	Thomas A. Foster
1961	Herbert L. Flack
1962	Grover C. Bowles
1963	Vernon O. Trygstad
1964	Albert P. Lauve
1965	Sister Mary Berenice, S.S.M.
1966	Robert P. Fischelis
1967	Paul F. Parker
1968	Clifton J. Latiolais
1969	Leo F. Godley
1970	Joseph A. Oddis
1971	Sister M. Gonzales, R.S.M.
1972	William M. Heller
1973	George L. Phillips
1974	Louis P. Jeffrey
1975	Sister Mary Florentine, C.S.C.
1976	R. David Anderson
1977	Herbert S. Carlin
1978	Allen J. Brands
1979	Milton W. Skolaut
1980	Donald C. Brodie
1981	Kenneth N. Barker
1982	William E. Smith
1983	Warren E. McConnell
1984	Mary Jo Reilly
1985	Fred M. Eckel

Harvey A. K. Whitney (1894-1957) received his Ph.C. degree from the University of Michigan College of Pharmacy in 1923. He was appointed to the pharmacy staff of University Hospital in Ann Arbor in 1925 and was named Chief Pharmacist there in 1927. He served in that position for nearly 20 years. He is credited with establishing the first hospital pharmacy internship program—now known as a residency program—at the University of Michigan in 1927.

Harvey A. K. Whitney was an editor, author, educator, practitioner, and hospital pharmacy leader. He was instrumental in developing a small group of hospital pharmacists into a subsection of the American Pharmaceutical Association and finally, in 1942, into the American Society of Hospital Pharmacists. He was the first ASHP President and co-founder, in 1943, of the *Bulletin of the ASHP*, which in 1958 became the *American Journal of Hospital Pharmacy*. The Harvey A. K. Whitney Lecture Award was established in 1950 by the Michigan Society of Hospital Pharmacists (now the Southeastern Michigan Society of Hospital Pharmacists) to honor the first President of the American Society of Hospital Pharmacists. Responsibility for administration of the Award was accepted by the American Society of Hospital Pharmacists in 1963 and, since that time, it has been presented annually to honor outstanding contributions to the practice of hospital pharmacy. The Harvey A. K. Whitney Lecture Award has become known as "hospital pharmacy's highest honor."

health-care workers is that managers have neglected to use their most important asset. We all agree that continuing education is necessary for professional growth, particularly because the information explosion is a part of our way of life. We are forced to pay attention to immediate problems, but we must save time for specific topics that particularly appeal to us. Diligence in pursuing a "labor of love" allows you the opportunity to grow intellectually and the ability to see exciting new horizons.

Those who urge you to be better quite often also suggest that you work on a topic of interest to *them*. It is tempting for me to use this occasion to suggest that you learn to control infusion rates by programming drug half-lives and patients' biofeedback into a computer. Or you could try to solve solubility problems that arise from concentrating drug solutions for microinfusions. Should we also use solvents other than water? It would be an amazing coincidence if we both were interested in the same problems. There is no need to ask you this, because somewhere, someone is already toiling in the vineyards looking for answers to these and other perceived problems.

A Part of All That I Have Met

In *Ulysses*, Tennyson says, "I am a part of all that I have met." I have worked in Maine, Connecticut, and Massachusetts and have been on the faculty of three colleges of pharmacy. I could not begin to tell you about all the wonderful people I have met or of the pleasure students have given to me over the years. To be with people such as Vincent Bouchard, Leo Godley, William Heller, Susan Fish, Paul Pierpaoli, or David Zilz is always stimulating, productive, and enjoyable. These names come immediately to mind, but there are many others.

Let me tell you about just two people I have worked with. A young methods engineer came into our department fresh from college. His youthful enthusiasm and educational background caused the staff to look at their routine in an entirely new way. It was not long before he was contributing in the area of materials management. From there, he went on to establish America's first hospital laboratory of industrial engineering. He now has his own company on the west coast.

I am proud but a little embarrassed to tell you the next story. A young Latvian lady who joined us as a secretary always seemed to be taking a course at one of the many schools in the Boston area. This went on for years. Only when she asked for a couple of hours off one day did I learn that she was graduating from Harvard. (So much for the myth that I have an interest in personnel.) My point is

that each one of the individuals I mentioned kept chipping away at professional growth, and, like interest compounded over a period of time, the results are impressive.

If you are a part of all that you have met, logic dictates that you are a part of others. May I suggest that you be tolerant of others who at the moment hold an opinion that is different from yours. John Locke said, "New opinions are always suspected and usually opposed." Each recipient of the Whitney Award had his or her own strong personality, and there can be no doubt that some of their opinions were opposed. Yet each individual had the courage to face rejection and the tenacity to persevere. They would also state their beliefs publicly. Donald Francke had the courage to present provocative and controversial opinions and then stride down from the podium leaving the audience buzzing. You do not have to be that dramatic, but if you do not speak out no one will know what you believe in.

I doubt that many of you have thought much about the dual role of journal editors. You are all familiar with their unpleasant task of rejecting certain papers so that only those of the highest caliber are published for your reading pleasure. But editors also have a role in recognizing new ideas and different approaches to old problems and encouraging inexperienced or previously unsuccessful authors to submit their work for the rest of us to share. I appreciate the courtesy and encouragement given to me by editors Donald Francke, George Provost, and Neil Davis.

When you want to talk with someone about medication errors, you think of Ken Barker; drug information, Paul Parker; organizational affairs, Joseph Oddis; clinical pharmacy, Donald McLeod; computers, William Gouveia; nuclear pharmacy, Ronald Callahan; i.v. incompatibilities, Lawrence Trissel. Each one of them nurtured an innovative idea and, despite an incessant demand for his time and the constant clamor for conformity, each devoted much time and energy to his respective area of interest. Each was blessed with one or more of the qualities we have outlined this evening. We are blessed that they chose to practice pharmacy.

In addition to the ways to grow professionally that we have looked at, you may have other ways that help you attain that nice warm inner feeling of accomplishment. Public recognition then becomes frosting on the cake. The frosting is delicious!

Reference

1. Williams RB. Achieving excellence. *Am J Hosp Pharm.* 1986; 43:617-24.