



Peers in Action: Women in Pharmacy

Featuring an Influential Female Pharmacist Inspiring Change Through Collaboration and Involvement: *Kerri Okamura, R.Ph., Director of Pharmacy Operations, KTA Super Stores, CPESN® Hawaii Luminary*

Kerri Okamura is a pioneer for the current and future state of pharmacy. As the Director of Pharmacy Operations for KTA Super Stores Pharmacies on the island of Hawaii, her mission is to be proactive in making sure the profession continues to thrive. The industry is constantly changing, and keeping up with that change can be difficult for some, but for Kerri, it's necessary. "What drives me to get involved is what the future could look like. I'm trying to find new ways we can evolve our profession so we can continue to be an important player on the health care team and ensure our profession moves forward," she explained.

One of the ways Kerri stays ahead of the curve is through her involvement with the Community Pharmacy Enhanced Services Network (CPESN®) Hawaii. Kerri serves as a luminary, and in her role, she works with other luminaries and network members to try to find solutions to better organize patient care with additional comprehensive care teams and enhance patient services. "Pharmacy is difficult right now. We must look at providing enhanced services and working collaboratively with other pharmacists, practitioners and payers; this is a different way of looking at pharmacy practice. Being a part of CPESN helps with that. There are solutions. There's a whole network of other pharmacists that have experimented, have changed, have ideas and have data to prove their efforts. We can do more and we should get paid for it, so CPESN is the direction we have to go," said Kerri.

Community Involvement

Aside from furthering and driving change within the pharmacy profession, Kerri is also civically involved with her local community and is passionate about an issue that affects not only her own community, but the entire country. She plays an active role with an opioid task force for Hawaii and is currently helping to develop a plan to inform and train first responders, law enforcement and other relevant groups about the dangers and risks of opioids, and how to best react and respond to calls or situations involving opioid activities. She's also working with another pharmacist and the Board of Pharmacy in Hawaii to create a guidance document on dispensing controlled substances and opioids to patients.



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On top of those efforts, Kerri involves students from the University of Hawai'i at Hilo's Daniel K. Inouye College of Pharmacy program as much as she can with KTA Super Stores Pharmacies. The pharmacies are sites for experiential rotations for students. "My pharmacists and I precept students so they can complete their IPPE and APPE rotations. We also hire some pharmacy students as paid interns. Many times, we hire the ones who have completed their IPPE rotations at our pharmacy. I think it's important for them to get involved in professional associations. It's significant in their development as future leaders and helps us stay up-to-date on the changes going on in the practice of pharmacy," Kerri explained.

She goes on to describe how pharmacists are uniquely positioned to enhance patient care through collaboration with local providers. Kerri works with the East Hawaii Independent Physicians Association to enhance the relationship between providers and pharmacists. "We've done informational presentations for them so they can better understand our profession and how we can make the whole health care process for patients better. The first presentation we offered was about medication synchronization and what we're doing at the pharmacy level to aid in adherence. They've asked us to come back and offer further sessions. It really does help providers better understand what we do and why we do it. It also keeps us at top-of-mind for them in case they need any assistance or want to partner together in the future," said Kerri.

Accomplishments and Advice

Kerri mentions that amongst her favorite career accomplishments is her team at KTA Super Stores Pharmacies. "It took time, but we've formed a hardworking, motivated team. This team is open to change, is willing to try and is always evolving. It makes my life a lot easier to have this support system in place. It also helps that we have the same vision and goals and are working toward bettering our profession and business."

Kerri's advice not only to pharmacy students, but to pharmacists new to the profession and to more seasoned professionals, is to get involved somehow. She encourages everyone to stay up-to-date and advocate for the profession as much as possible. Kerri goes on to say that even being a member of organizations and associations like NCPA or APhA helps tremendously. "They send out emails all the time informing us on what's happening in the profession. Pharmacy is at a point where it's changing and we're continuously fighting for reimbursements and working to obtain provider status. We have to get involved and stay informed now more than ever."



Kerri with her team of pharmacy managers. From left to right: Megan Arbles, PharmD; Elissa Brown, PharmD; Kerri, Tricia Anderson, PharmD; Necole Miyazaki, PharmD

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