

NATIONAL PHARMACY WEEK TALK BY MAYOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY, TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 2:15 P.M., WCCO

[1945]  
Correspondence  
or this filed  
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Three years"

The opening of National Pharmacy Week serves as a fitting occasion for examining the contribution made to human progress by the oldest branch of the medical profession. I am happy today to pay tribute to the pharmacists of America whose profession is one from which all medical science originally developed. The record of pharmacy is one of continuous contribution to human welfare and human progress. Few institutions have a history of greater devotion and service to the needs of mankind than does pharmacy.

The pharmacist of today carries on a tradition that arose from religion. His code of professional ethics, his conception of service and his conception of duty to the needs of others arose from religion. The beginning of pharmacy is in the early days, dim now in the mist of antiquity, when the land upon which ancient Rome was to rise was a wilderness, before Greece was a nation, long before the first pyramid was built, and when civilization had hardly yet begun. ~~In those ancient, quiet times medicine was pharmacy and pharmacy was religion.~~ By the men who lived then it was believed that all misfortunes that befell them arose from the influence exerted upon them and their surroundings by spirits--ghosts, malign beings that wished them evil and brought them evil.

Disease was one of man's misfortunes, caused, they believed like all others, by evil spirits that had taken possession of his body, ~~possessed him.~~ Since disease was a spiritual matter, it was only logical that the priests should be the ones who gave their services to treating disease. To this end, one of their methods was to make the man's body and his surroundings as unpleasant as possible for the spirits that

tormented him with disease and suffering, thus hoping to drive them away. They performed mysterious rites over him, made a noise to frighten off the spirits, and administered to the sufferer herbs and roots and berries as unpleasant as possible in order to make his body distasteful to the spirits that inhabited it.

Now among these herbs and roots applied for spiritual reasons some few had an unexpectedly great efficiency in the relief of suffering. By chance these priests had stumbled upon true remedial herbs. But they interpreted their action as frightening off the demons of pain and bringing relief from suffering. However erroneous their beliefs, the priests of primitive religion were quick to note and to record in their tradition the benefits of the remedies that chance had put into their hands.

The priests prepared these remedies and applied them. They devoted their lives to the service of their afflicted fellow-men. They were the first pharmacists. It is from them down through the ages that pharmacy has come, carrying with it inseparably a tradition of service freely given and a code of ethics jealously preserved. Pharmacy has grown now into a science of wide usefulness but its aims, its duties, and its principles have remained unaltered throughout the centuries.

The pharmacists of today, safeguarded by laws and regulations advocated by their own ethics, occupy in our midst a position of minor priesthood. Whether or not we are conscious of this fact, we nevertheless accept them as such -- and our faith in them is not misplaced.

Pharmacy has never deviated from the ancient tradition of its purpose -- to prepare and compound the ~~substances~~ <sup>medicines</sup> which prevent, control, and cure disease and relieve suffering.

It is with a feeling of pride in profession, a desire for just recognition of their achievements, that the pharmacists now devote a

week each year, National Pharmacy Week, in the interest of a better and wider understanding of their profession, their aims, their ambitions, and the service that they render to public welfare and public health.

This very service that the pharmacists render the people of America has tended to obscure their high professional standing. We look upon the pharmacist and the pharmacy in a light, different from that of any other profession or institution. We have grown to expect, until we now accept as our right, a service in a drug store that we do not ask or expect from any other institution. We look upon the pharmacist as a public servant. How many times have you passed by all other places to ask a question, obtain a service of obligation from a pharmacist? He does not fence himself about with formal pretensions that cultivate a sense of professional aloofness. He stocks his shelves with many things far removed from medicine not alone because of economic pressure but because of your demands for this added service. A public servant, even when the duty is self-imposed, is at a disadvantage in a democratic country. Familiarity that grows from a sense of possession -- the feeling that the pharmacist and his shop are yours to command -- has given rise in the minds of some people to the idea that the pharmacist is only a semi-professional man. And that idea the pharmacists quite naturally resent.

You who accept freely the service that the pharmacist renders to you sometimes forget that he is a trained man, with pride of profession, one who in college has studied exhaustively in chemistry, toxicology, physiology, Latin, and many other subjects far removed from the mere technique of mixing ~~medicaments~~<sup>medicines</sup>. In addition to his college training, each pharmacist serves an apprenticeship in practical experience and finally undergoes a very rigorous state examination. Then and then only does the state proclaim him qualified to prepare ~~medicaments~~<sup>medicines</sup> and dispense

them.

It is the pharmacists themselves who have been instrumental in bringing about these exceptionally high qualifications and requirements for entrance into their profession. And why have they done so? Because pharmacy is not merely the mixing of drugs, the following of a recipe written by a physician. The pharmacist stands as a safeguard to your health and life. The pharmacist must know the purity of every ingredient he uses; to this end he has been one of our strongest forces in bringing about the laws governing the purity of foods and drugs. He must know the action on the body of each ~~medicament~~<sup>medicinal</sup> that he dispenses. He must assure himself that the amounts prescribed by the physician are the correct ones. Legally and morally he shares a responsibility as great as the physician's. He must not fail the public; your very lives are in his hands. It is to meet this requirement and to prevent any blot upon a ~~cherished~~ profession that the pharmacists themselves have advocated the laws imposing a high standard of education for entrance to their profession.

The pharmacist does not fail the trust imposed upon him. He has the confidence of the public. But he is entitled also to a public recognition of the high professional standing and dignity of his calling. And so the pharmacists take the opportunity this week -- National Pharmacy Week -- to demonstrate to you some of the things that their profession represents.

A sound body is generally recognized as an essential factor in making for success. Without a sound body, man is handicapped, not only in the achievement of success in his calling, but also in the attainment of a full measure of happiness and comfort in living. The condition of our bodies, therefore, is of vital concern to all of us.

~~Pharmacy is one of the several professions, the practitioners~~  
~~of which consecrate their lives to the service of helping us to maintain~~  
~~and health.~~ Legally and morally, the pharmacists' responsibilities  
are as great as those of the physician, notwithstanding the fact that  
economic necessity and public demand generally compels him to conduct  
a commercial emporium in conjunction with the practice of his profession.

The practice of pharmacy, considered strictly from the stand-  
point of professional service, comprises all of the processes and  
operations involved in the selection and identification of drugs and  
chemicals, their manipulation or combination into forms suitable for  
administration to man or animals and the proper labelling of the finished  
product. ~~This service, commonly referred to as the filling of prescrip-~~  
~~tions, requires a broad knowledge of the properties of the materials~~  
~~handled, accuracy and skill, and is undoubtedly the most important of the~~  
~~several services rendered by the pharmacist.~~

Considered from a broader standpoint, the practice of pharmacy  
comprehends all of the related services now offered by the average drug  
store, but the most important of these are the administration of first  
aid in cases of injury due to accident and to the giving of information  
and advice upon matters pertaining to public health.

The responsibilities of the pharmacist are many and not all  
of them are easy to bear. He is legally accountable for any deviation  
from standard in the quality of the drugs and medicines which he sells  
over the counter or dispenses on prescriptions, for neglect to register  
the sales of poisons, for failure to comply with the law in the sale of  
habit-forming drugs such as the narcotics and certain hypnotics, for  
dispensing drugs or medicines which are not the same in all respects as  
those ordered by the physician, for mistakes made in the filling of  
prescriptions, for inaccuracies in dosage and for the improper labelling

of drugs and medicines. In most of the states he must have on file in his store the latest revised editions of the two official standards for drugs and medicines, the UNITED STATES PHARMACOPOEIA and the NATIONAL FORMULARY, and it follows as a logical sequence that he must be equipped with the proper pharmaceutical utensils to enable him to compound the preparations contained in these two books of standards and fill prescriptions properly.

Some of the foregoing responsibilities are moral as well as legal in character, but the pharmacist has other responsibilities which are strictly moral in their nature. He is morally answerable for the sale of certain drugs and medicines for improper use, for raising false hopes in the minds of the sick by recommending the purchase of medicines for the cure of diseases which are known to be incurable, for giving false information with regard to the value of a drug or medicine as a remedy in order to make a sale, for failure to supply the poor with drugs and medicines when needed for immediate use, even though they cannot pay for them, for the injury to character which may result from divulging information with regard to the purchases made by his customers, and for many other acts of commission and omission.

~~Because of the importance of the pharmaceutical services heretofore mentioned as a factor in the maintenance of the health of the public and because of the legal and moral responsibilities involved, it follows that pharmacists must have a special kind of education and training to fit them to give these services and to assume their responsibilities. As a matter of fact, the necessity for some official requirement covering this point is recognized as so essential that all of the various states have made provision for it in the regulatory laws which they have enacted.~~

Every state in the Union has on its statute books laws regulating the practice of pharmacy. All of these laws require that applicants

for a license to practice pharmacy must pass a satisfactory examination given by a board of pharmaceutical examiners, and most of them require graduation from high school and an approved college of pharmacy before the applicants are eligible to take this examination. In addition, the laws of the states, with one or two exceptions, require that the applicants before presenting themselves for examination shall furnish evidence of having had one to four years of experience in a pharmacy where physician's prescriptions are regularly filled.

To furnish the kind of education needed to prepare pharmacists to give the service which the public expects of them and to meet their legal and moral responsibilities there are 68 colleges of pharmacy now operating throughout the various states. 53 of these are integral parts of universities, most of which are state universities, 4 have university affiliations and 11 operate independently. All of these colleges require the completion of a minimum of four years of college work for graduation, including, in addition to the subjects already enumerated, course in the cultural subjects, economics, public health and a variety of other subjects intended to fit the student to render the many non-professional services expected of the pharmacist and to prepare him to take his proper place in the life of the community.

My tribute here to the pharmacists of America and to the ancient and honored profession of pharmacy is one of words only, words sincerely spoken. But let your tribute be one of acts. You have accepted freely the service that pharmacy extends to you; in return, is it not just that you devote a few minutes to becoming better acquainted with the profession of your pharmacist? Examine the displays and exhibits prepared for your inspection during National Pharmacy Week. You will understand then why it is so important that only pharmacists who have had years of specialized education and practical training shall be in a position to serve you in a capacity upon which health and even life may depend.



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