

Mail body: Draft

Sent from my Chairpersons Perry Bailey, and members of Health Coverage, Insurance, and Financial Services Committee

Good Afternoon

My name is Gary Manzo. I am a resident of Windham

I am proud to say that I enjoyed 43 years as a practicing registered pharmacist.

It was a tough decision, but in September 2021 I decided to retire. I felt the pressures of quotas and goals were putting a strain on my ability to do my job safely. The stress of doing my job, compounded with increasing workload demands was too much. I realized that the profession I loved so much was no longer fun or rewarding. It was time.

I have often equated my profession to a juggler. It's like trying to keep all the balls in the air. Only the balls are

Patient Counseling
Prescription Review
Processing Prescriptions
Checking Interactions
Allergies
Filling Prescriptions
Third Party Issues
Dealing with Prescribers
Dispensing
Helping Customers
Inventory
And more.

Most of the time, you will have more than one of these balls in the air. All it takes is a simple distraction. Then you drop a ball. Only -in life, as a pharmacist, we can't drop a ball. That ball is a patient! If you are lucky, it's a labeling mistake that doesn't end in anything tragic. But it could be catastrophic- even fatal. As a pharmacist, we go to work praying we never drop a ball. It's a lot of pressure. With increased workloads and diminishing help, it will only be a matter of time before the ball drops.

Back in the 70's, the local pharmacist worked in pharmacies that were staffed with Pharmacist and assistants to deliver the services. Often times there were multiple Registered Pharmacists working together to deliver their services. The pharmacist would charge his customers his professional fee to cover expenses as a business.

Then, along came the chain drug stores, controlling third parties, diminished fees. Corporate pharmacies were working with diminished profits. This forces them to demand cuts to prevent revenue loss. These cuts mean less help. These cuts mean more pressure to do more with less. Which means it will only be a matter of time before you drop the ball! **YOUR PATIENTS HEALTH**

In 2013, I started a new position. I remember with my interview with the District Manager that there was a position open in Brunswick. He advised me that it was a store with no technician help. He advised me that I should float and in time move into the position. After six months floating and a broken ankle I moved into the Brunswick pharmacy- still without technician help. It was a slower volume store, but I was "Chief Cook and Bottle Washer". I was responsible for:

Greeting
Processing
Filling
Counseling
Register Transactions

Literally the only employee- all awhile trying to do the daily tasks necessary to keep the pharmacy operational:

Answering Phone
Calling Dr.s

Calling Third Parties
Processing Drug Orders
Processing prescriptions
Sometimes doing 3 or more tasks at once.

In June 2018, Alice- my significant other- was diagnosed with cancer. In September, my Pharmacist in Charge (PIC) was suffering from severe pain and went out on medical leave. With the PIC out with medical leave- we had an influx of floaters. The daily workload tasks were not getting done because they were unfamiliar with the stores dynamics- they just filled prescriptions. I was in a high pressure situation-trying to balance an increasing workload and worrying about not being able to be by Alice's side while she was undergoing her battle with cancer.

Sadly, I made a labeling error (eventually another labeling error). Thankfully, they were noticed and there was no harm to the patients. When my District Manager (DM) came in to counsel me, we were discussing ways to prevent this from happening. He acknowledged that the loss of the PIC resulted in backup of tasks not being completed. I was just about to ask for technician help when the DM mentioned that we were not filling enough prescriptions to meet the quota for a technician. He also mentioned something about the company being fiscally down and they were not in the position to add a technician. I was embarrassed for my errors and decided not to say anything. I regret not saying anything to this day.

During COVID 19- I was trying to fill prescriptions and running out vaccines- still with no help. In late 2020 we eventually added a part time technician.

I'm retired now. Why should I care? I am here to advocate for my contemporaries. So they get to go to work, without fear of losing their job, for fear of metrics, or even worse, a tragic mistake. I know there are many voices out there who will not be heard in these chambers for fear of corporate retributions/ terminations.

It's time to stand up and protect my profession. We can't afford to drop the ball.

Thanks for the opportunity to stand before you and be heard.

Respectfully-

Gary W Manzo RPh