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To our esteemed colleagues and ASHP members, the past 6 months have been nothing short of extraordinary. As pharmacists, colleagues, friends, and family members, we all faced unanticipated challenges, and there is still much uncertainty ahead due to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic.

We are disappointed that we were unable to gather with colleagues in Seattle, WA, for ASHP’s Summer Meetings and Exhibition and the annual meeting of the House of Delegates. Without this traditional in-person gathering, we called on ASHP’s creativity and ingenuity to bring together delegates, conduct key policy work, and find new ways to deliver elements of ASHP’s world-class educational programming. We also acknowledge what we all lost: opportunities to network with our peers, to celebrate the annual Harvey A.K. Whitney Lecture Award winner, to usher in new leaders for ASHP’s sections, forums and Board of Directors, and to witness the inaugural address of ASHP’s new president, Thomas J. Johnson, PharmD, MBA, BCCCP, BCPS, FASHP, FCCM.



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Traditionally, ASHP’s chief executive officer and president deliver individual addresses to the House of Delegates in June. We work for months on these remarks, hoping that each speech will convey important and inspiring insights about ASHP and its members. But 2020 has been anything but traditional. And in the wake of COVID-19’s incursion on everyone’s lives, it felt right for us to join together in a single address to share our thoughts, express our tremendous gratitude to you, and convey our hopes for a bright and prosperous path ahead.

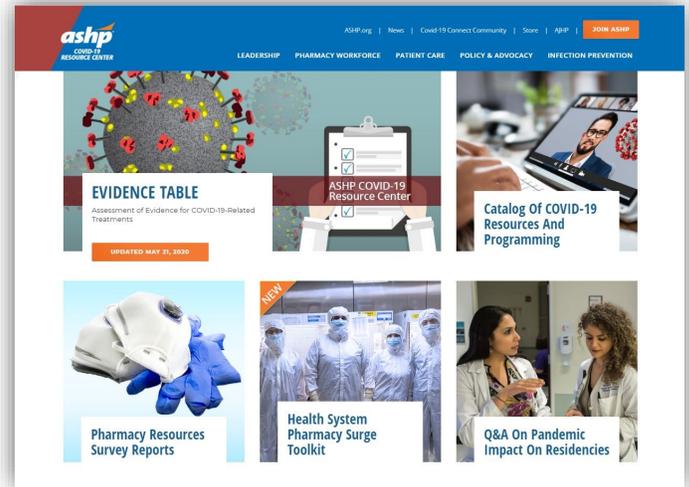
The year 2020 will forever mark a period in ASHP history when pharmacy—and all of healthcare—came together under extraordinary circumstances to help patients and support those serving on the front lines of the pandemic. During this unprecedented time, ASHP embraced the “never settle” mantra of President Kathy Pawlicki’s 2019 inaugural address by accelerating efforts to support members, working with local, state, and federal partners, and leading the profession through an unpredictable and often overwhelming public health crisis.

There is no other organization in the world like ASHP, with its remarkable 78-year history on the forefront of improving medication use and enhancing patient safety. ASHP’s strength, relevance, and commitment to challenging the status quo have shined during the COVID-19 response, as we all met new challenges in a dynamic environment and proved that the pharmacy profession has never been stronger than it is today.

## COVID-19 response

When the time comes to reflect on the effect of COVID-19 on the healthcare community and the profession of pharmacy, ASHP will be remembered for responding swiftly and decisively to ensure that pharmacists—and all healthcare professionals—had the critical tools and information they needed to care for COVID-19 patients.

In early March, ASHP launched a COVID-19 Resource Center that became a widely used hub within the healthcare community, offering regularly updated tools and guidance, news and podcasts, and policy and advocacy resources. Content that would have previously been restricted to members was made available to all healthcare professionals and anyone who needed access. In doing so, ASHP effectively increased the reach of these vital resources by more than 50%, underscoring the heavy use and effectiveness of the content.



**Drug information.** Facing a lethal, rapidly spreading virus with no known treatments remains a frightening prospect. ASHP members worked tirelessly on the front lines with physicians and other interprofessional colleagues to identify medications that help patients combat the disease. Theories and assumptions about many different drugs were in play within the healthcare community and in the public at large, resulting in real concerns about drug hoarding, supply chain issues, shortages, and adverse outcomes.

To assist in monitoring the rapid and dynamic flow of information about possible treatments, ASHP leveraged our comprehensive drug information expertise to develop the *ASHP Assessment of Evidence for COVID-19 Treatments*. The evidence-based table is updated regularly to provide clinical guidance on emerging therapeutic approaches to COVID-19. One of ASHP's most valuable COVID-19 resources, the table was downloaded more than 20,000 times between mid-March and the end of May.

In addition, ASHP published its *Recommendations for Stewardship of Off-Label Treatments for COVID-19*. The document, which was downloaded nearly 6,444 times during the spring months, is a general guide for prescribers, pharmacists, and patients about the appropriate use of experimental treatments. The recommendations address concerns about hoarding and inappropriate prescribing to help mitigate potential shortages of critical medications.

Understanding that comprehensive, accurate drug information is perhaps the most important tool for pharmacists during COVID-19 response, ASHP opened access to 2 of our most in-depth

resources, *AHFS Drug Information* and the *Interactive Handbook on Injectable Drugs*. This action ensured that all healthcare professionals could quickly access critical details on potential treatments. More than 26,000 new users took advantage of these important resources between March and June, equating to more than \$6 million in value for the healthcare community.

**Clinical resources.** ASHP's guiding philosophy in the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic was to give all healthcare professionals every possible advantage to optimize patient outcomes. In that spirit, ASHP took the unprecedented step to make our Critical Care Pharmacy Specialty Review Course, Practice Exam, and Core Therapeutic Modules package available for free for a limited time. More than 57,000 individuals enrolled to use these comprehensive resources. ASHP also gave healthcare professionals free access to pharmacy competency assessments related to emergency preparedness and infection prevention.

In total, ASHP made more than \$40 million in educational resources available free of charge to ensure that all healthcare professionals had access to vital information, tools, and resources to combat COVID-19.



**Real-time information and connections.** Timely information sharing and first-person perspectives have been critical tools in the fight against COVID-19. ASHP led efforts to connect members and other practitioners with stories and case studies from peers who were on the frontlines in epicenters like New York and New Jersey. ASHP ramped up production of its popular @ASHPOfficial Podcast, produced live webinars to highlight case studies and best practices from institutions around the country, and hosted Twitter chats to connect peers in real time.

In addition, ASHP created an open COVID-19 Connect Community for members and colleagues to share information and engage with peers everywhere. More than 55,000 professionals engaged in the community, generating more than 1,200 discussion topics. The community enabled ASHP to share weekly pulse surveys on issues pharmacists were managing in the field. Insights gleaned from these surveys and the COVID-19 Connect Community helped ASHP create needed and timely resources.

ASHP also developed and launched CareerPharm RapidConnect. The service helps health systems, hospitals, and other healthcare organizations locate pharmacists and pharmacy technicians to fill COVID-19–related needs, including remote medication order review and verification and clinical pharmacy specialist services. CareerPharm RapidConnect, like other pandemic-response resources from ASHP, was offered free of charge to all healthcare professionals.

**Policy and advocacy actions.** The onset of COVID-19 created a significant imperative for

enhanced advocacy to ensure patient access to needed therapies and to support expanded roles for frontline pharmacists. ASHP was active at the local, state and federal levels, engaging regularly with policymakers, regulators, and key collaborators to support you and your interprofessional colleagues.

One of the pandemic's most significant challenges was the immediate effects on the supply chain. Patient care providers in early epicenter cities like Seattle and New York faced sudden shortfalls in supplies of personal protective equipment, respirators, and vital medications. ASHP worked tirelessly to spur federal agencies, including the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), to remove administrative barriers within the drug supply chain that were impeding access to critical medications. And when remdesivir was granted Emergency Use Authorization by the FDA, ASHP was there to encourage transparency within the supply chain to help ensure adequate supply was directed to facilities in greatest need.

Due to ASHP's direct advocacy efforts, FDA clarified compounding guidance by removing the 1-mile radius requirement for hospital-compounded medications. FDA also relaxed requirements on 503A and 503B outsourcing pharmacies for hospital use of compounded medications and eased rules on the combining and repackaging of propofol.

DEA, in direct response to a letter cosigned by ASHP, the American Medical Association, the American Society of Clinical Oncologists, and the American Society of Anesthesiologists, increased annual production quota allocations for Schedule II controlled substances—medications that are essential for mechanically ventilated patients.

ASHP's efforts yielded further action from DEA when the agency relaxed limits on the distribution of controlled substances between practitioners, allowed distributors to ship controlled substances directly to satellite hospitals or clinics, and allowed for greater flexibility in opioid treatment programs.

ASHP also focused on efforts to increase pharmacists' scope of practice to aid in the COVID-19 response. In April, Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar authorized licensed pharmacists to order and administer COVID-19 tests. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services also issued rules allowing pharmacists to perform these tests. Many states expanded the role of pharmacists as part of state-of-emergency declarations. These orders were significant steps to provide needed assistance during the pandemic, and ASHP continues to push for expanded recognition of pharmacists by payers, including Medicare. ASHP also worked closely with its state affiliates and national organizations to push for pharmacist reimbursement during the pandemic.

One of ASHP's most important charges is to advocate on your behalf so that your voices are heard on issues that affect your practice and profession. ASHP is proud of the gains made to improve the odds against this frightening pandemic, but much work remains. ASHP will continue to harness its powerful

grassroots network on Capitol Hill and in statehouses across the country to help you fully leverage your expertise and training on behalf of your patients.

### **ASHP: innovator, influencer, and convener**

It's hard to look back over the first half of 2020 and remember a time when we were not in the thick of the pandemic response. Nevertheless, ASHP staff and volunteers have been working diligently on many other critical initiatives to keep you on the forefront of medication safety and patient care and move the profession forward.

ASHP recently enriched its expertise and thought leadership with key staff additions that enhance the organization's ability to produce cutting-edge, world-class content. In December 2019, ASHP welcomed Past President Paul W. Bush, PharmD, MBA, BCPS, FASHP, as vice president of global resource development and consulting. The following month, Mary Ann Kliethermes, PharmD, joined ASHP as director of medication safety and quality. The addition of these highly respected and knowledgeable professionals to ASHP's already exceptional staff speaks to the organization's ongoing commitment to develop and deliver unparalleled resources that enhance medication use and patient outcomes on a global scale.



Paul W. Bush  
PharmD,  
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Mary Ann Kliethermes  
PharmD

ASHP has long been a leader in the effort to identify enduring solutions to our nation's ongoing opioid crisis. In October 2019, we convened an interdisciplinary Opioid Task Force to identify actionable recommendations, built on existing national calls to action, and to provide a synergistic roadmap to address the epidemic while ensuring safe and effective pain management. Task Force members examined consensus findings and evidence-based best practices with the goal of providing fresh perspectives on how the unique skills and contributions of pharmacists can be leveraged to help solve this national problem.

The recommendations reflect the breadth, depth, direct experiences, and expertise of Task Force members. The team is uniquely qualified to identify solutions that address the opioid epidemic through better access to medication-assisted treatment and the development of stewardship programs and opioid-related community resources.

The final report of the ASHP Opioid Task Force unveils 69 recommendations spread among 9 domains. The report was approved by ASHP's Board of Directors in early April and has been submitted for publication in AJHP. The document will be widely disseminated across ASHP's communications channels and shared with colleagues, partners, and stakeholders with a goal of advancing the Task Force's recommendations.

Early this year, ASHP announced that it would convene a highly anticipated Summit on Safe, Effective, and Accessible High-Quality Medicines as a Matter of National Security. The live summit was scheduled to take place in March but was postponed due to the pandemic. We are very pleased that the event will take place virtually over the course of 5 days this summer. The summit is co-convened by ASHP, the American Hospital Association, the American Medical Association, and the United States Pharmacopeia. The agenda includes a topic made even more urgent in the wake of COVID-19: U.S. pharmaceutical supply chain resilience. Summit attendees will discuss the diversity of domestic and international ingredient and component sources needed to ensure a consistently safe, effective, and accessible supply of quality medicines, devices, and related supplies. The participants, who represent clinician groups, industry, supply chain entities, and government agencies, bring unique and diverse perspectives on the subject matter.

The summit findings will inform recommendations to improve public-sector and private-sector oversight of foreign drug manufacturing and support clinical decision making and communications with patients and others involved in healthcare delivery. The conveners fully recognize the heightened awareness around these issues, given the current COVID-19 public health crisis, and look forward to sharing the outcomes of the summit with members and key stakeholders.

ASHP's annual Commission on Goals was held in early March, just before local and national social distancing policies took hold. This interdisciplinary group of thought leaders reviews healthcare trends and provides guidance on potential strategic areas of focus for ASHP. This year, the commission was charged with identifying strategies to prepare the healthcare workforce to optimize patient-centered care and medicine in a future where ever-evolving technologies and disruptive innovations will be the norm.

The gathering featured robust, forward-thinking discussions about ensuring a highly competent and skilled healthcare professional workforce that will adapt and embrace innovation and emerging technologies to advance patient care. Commission members also examined the roles that healthcare professions, colleges, associations, government, and accrediting bodies play in reimaging the workforce for the digital future. Additional discussions centered on how healthcare industry and associations can help ensure the development of safe and effective new technologies and how data and evidence will propel technological advances. Proceedings of the commission's meeting will be published online ahead of print in a forthcoming issue of *AJHP*.

In response to a growing need to support and connect pharmacy executives, ASHP in March announced the creation of the Pharmacy Executive Leadership Alliance™ (PELA™). PELA™ is a new engagement opportunity for chief pharmacy officers and pharmacy executive leaders at multihospital systems who face distinct challenges working within highly complex, vertically and horizontally integrated networks. To oversee this important endeavor, ASHP was pleased to promote

long-time staff member David Chen, BSP Pharm, MBA, to the position of assistant vice president, pharmacy leadership and planning.

PELA participants will engage pharmacy executives in peer-to-peer knowledge transfer and the exploration of market trends and innovations to meet multifaceted operational and clinical needs. The timing of PELA allowed for the rapid development of facilitated discussions around COVID-



19 business recovery. A series of virtual roundtables proved valuable for sharing information on critical business effects of the pandemic. Participants discussed the need to plan for new operating policies and procedures, organizational plans for increasing revenue and patient volumes, how to leverage telehealth, and the management of COVID-19–related pharmacy expenses.

Findings from these roundtable discussions, as well as information and key learnings from other PELA initiatives, will support ASHP’s members as they advance pharmacy practice, safe medication use, and improved patient outcomes.

ASHP derives its innovative spirit from its members, who demonstrate time and time again that settling for the status quo is never good enough. ASHP, at 55,000 members strong and growing, represents pharmacists, student pharmacists, and pharmacy technicians who are at the top of their game as they strive to achieve the very best in service to their colleagues and patients.

ASHP prides itself on representing members’ professional and practice needs and anticipating how those needs will evolve across a broad range of practice settings. To this end, the ASHP Board of Directors recently approved a new membership section, the Section of Pharmacy Educators to further ASHP’s commitment to preparing the pharmacy workforce. The section will be a home for individuals involved in educating, training, and mentoring student pharmacists, pharmacy residents, and pharmacy technicians across all learning and practice settings. Members of this new section will help crystalize ASHP’s strategic focus on elevating competencies, skills, and credentials across the pharmacy workforce and help to maximize pharmacists’ vital roles on interprofessional patient care teams.

In addition to providing new support for pharmacy for educators, ASHP continues its commitment to the training of pharmacy residents—the future leaders of our profession. During the 2020 ASHP Resident Matching Program, conducted in 2 phases this spring, 5,269 individuals matched with 2,551 pharmacy residency programs, continuing an era of unprecedented growth. Residency positions have increased by 46% over the past 5 years. ASHP and its Commission on Credentialing

proactively increased the flexibility of residency accreditation standards to address disruptions caused by the COVID-19 response, demonstrating continued commitment to residents and training programs.

## **Conclusion**

As we write these words in anticipation of our virtual meeting of the House of Delegates in June, there will no doubt be new developments related to COVID-19 and its effects on patients and providers across the country. As our nation slowly starts to regroup and seek a return to some semblance of normalcy, those who have been working on the front lines of patient care understand that the virus remains a threat, and our perception of “normal” will likely never be the same.

It is our hope that as we reflect on the year 2020, it is defined not by adversity, but by our collective response to it. Throughout this great public health crisis, we have all witnessed tremendous displays of selflessness, compassion, and generosity from our colleagues, friends and family. We have all experienced the great power of collaboration and the uncompromising determination of a healthcare community dedicated to our patients’ care and well-being against difficult odds.



*Photo Courtesy of Massachusetts General Hospital*

As we seek our path forward, it is that spirit of resilience and fortitude that will inspire and guide us. The lessons we have learned will lead us into a future that remains bright with promise for our profession and members. On behalf of ASHP, we look forward to continuing to support you with unparalleled networking opportunities, world-class educational programming, and best-in-class clinical resources to empower and inform your career and practice today and for many years to come.

We are beyond grateful for the continued support you have shown ASHP and for your unwavering commitment to the profession of pharmacy and the care of your patients.

Thank you.