



Prescribing Paths

PHARM.D. GRADUATES DISCOVER PASSION FOR NON-TRADITIONAL PHARMACY CAREERS

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Katherine Sulkowski, P'15

By Amanda Dabbs

In the last four decades, pharmacists have significantly changed their public perception as pill counters and medication distributors. Pharmacists are now viewed as trusted patient advocates, educators, medical counselors and health care team members. The range of career opportunities available to pharmacists has expanded exponentially, too.

Today, Pharm.D. graduates can choose from a multitude of traditional and non-traditional career paths.

“Non-traditional pharmacy careers provide pharmacists the ability to utilize their pharmacy and medication knowledge in combination with their other areas of interest to pursue careers they find both exciting and rewarding,” remarked Monica Skomo, Pharm.D., BCACP, CTTS, associate dean for Academic Affairs and Assessment and associate professor of Pharmacy Practice for Duquesne’s School of Pharmacy.



Monica Skomo, Pharm.D., BCACP, CTTS

DUKES THRIVING IN NON-TRADITIONAL PHARMACY CAREERS

During her pre-professional years, Katherine Sulkowski, P'15, already knew she wanted to pursue a non-traditional pharmacy career.

A clinical and scientific liaison for the global health care company Otsuka Pharmaceutical Co., Ltd., Sulkowski provides scientific education to health care professionals about her company’s products, as well as information on current disease research.

“I learned early on that a career in the pharmaceutical industry would provide me with continuous education and growth,” she said.

Duquesne Pharm.D. student Moses Ngang, P'24, is interested in a nuclear pharmacy career. Nuclear pharmacy was the first specialty recognized by the Board of Pharmacy Specialties in 1978 and focuses on safe and effective use of radioactive medications.

“I’m pursuing this niche career path because it fits well with my hyper-focused personality. This idea of being an expert in a specific area fascinates me more than having general knowledge about many different things,” Ngang said.

Mark Conklin, P'08, didn’t specifically pursue a non-traditional career path, but when he first encountered managed care through his experiential rotations at Duquesne, he thought it would be a good place to start. Since that experience, he has remained open-minded about



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opportunities that come his way.

“It’s fun to be able to work in an environment where we seek to solve health care challenges with technology-supported solutions,” said Conklin, chief technology officer for the health care technology company, Free Market Health.

Conklin oversees the company’s technology and product development efforts including application development, user experience and design, cybersecurity and data management.

In addition to innovative work environments, non-traditional pharmacy careers have the potential for flexible hours and remote work.

“While community and hospital pharmacists care for patients on weekends and holidays, non-traditional roles may offer more standard business hours and remote work options,” explained Thomas Falcione, Pharm, RPh, director of experiential education for the School of Pharmacy at Duquesne.

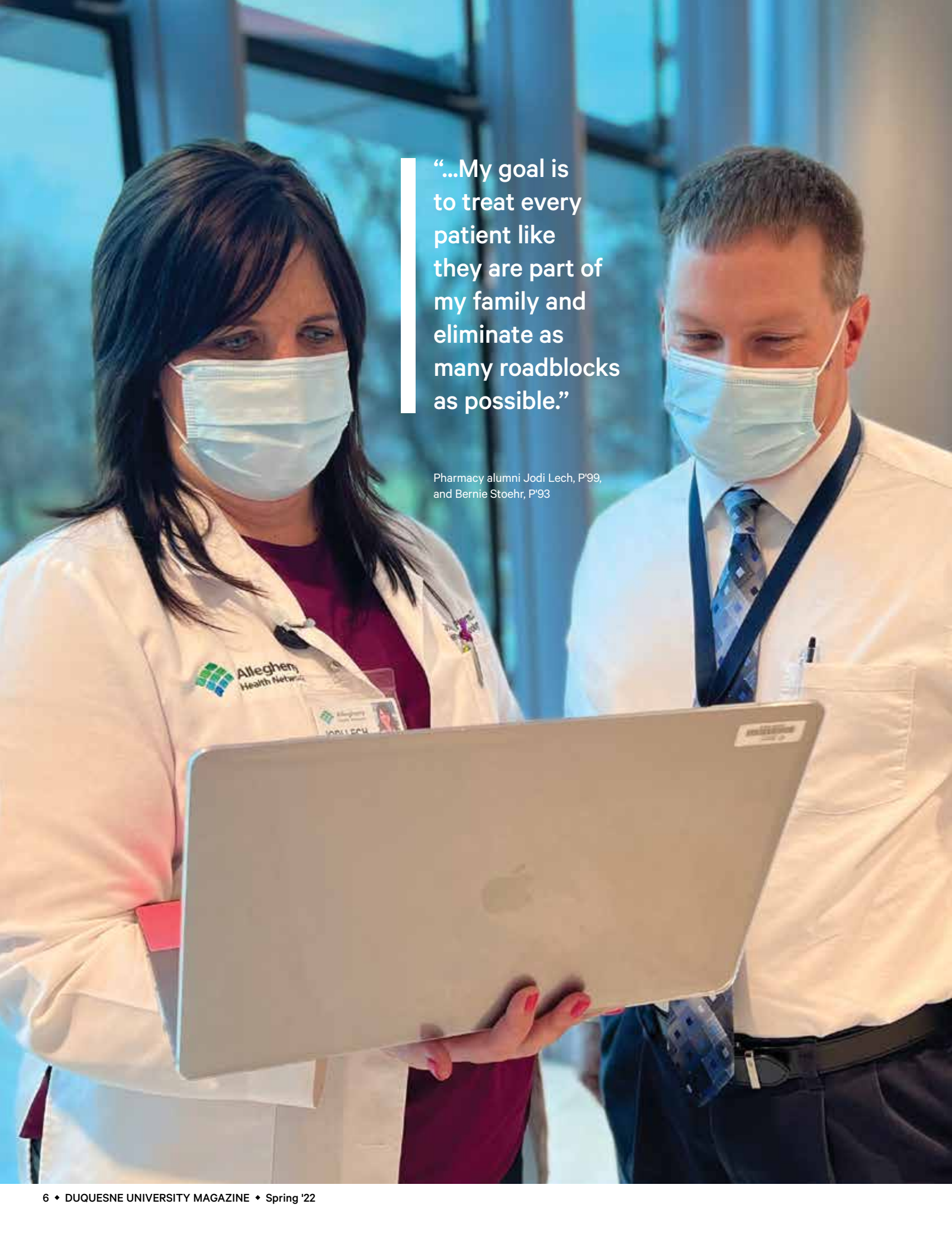
Another benefit for non-traditional pharmacists is the opportunity to have a far-reaching impact on patient care. Molly Shirey, P’15, a fully remote clinical pharmacy specialist for UPMC Health Plan, has learned there are many ways to impact a patient’s life working for a managed care organization.

“I can touch the lives of thousands of our members daily,” Shirey said.

She finds the most rewarding, yet challenging part of her position is that she is always reviewing medications for rare and complex disease states and must stay on top of the most recent guidelines and practice accordingly.

“In my department, we see all of the disease states. One request might be for osteoporosis, while the next might be for an off-label rare cancer treatment. We make life-changing decisions every day,” Shirey explained.

As director of pharmacy—oncology for Allegheny Health



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Pharmacy alumni Jodi Lech, P'99, and Bernie Stoehr, P'93

Network, Jodi Lech, P'99, has also been able to touch many patients' lives. She finds that one of the most rewarding parts of her job is witnessing the effect pharmacists have on the care and advanced treatment efforts for cancer patients.

"My goal is to treat every patient like they are part of my family and eliminate as many roadblocks as possible," said Lech, who credits Duquesne for giving her an amazing foundation for her pharmacy career.

"Duquesne has always been a place that has helped me grow," she added.

PHARM.D. STUDENTS ARE PREPARED FOR ANYTHING

At Duquesne, Pharm.D. students can choose from concentrations in acute care, ambulatory care, geriatrics, community pharmacy or entrepreneurial pharmacy, as well as elect to complete a public health minor.

Duquesne also offers a Pharm.D./B.S. Pharmaceutical Sciences dual degree for students passionate about research, a Pharm.D./MBA dual degree for those interested in also developing business and leadership skills and an online Pharm.D. program.

As part of the curriculum, Pharm.D. students are required to take Continuous Professional Development courses each semester, in which pharmacist experts from various fields speak to students about unique career paths. There also are student organizations at Duquesne focused on non-traditional careers such as managed care, consultant pharmacy, neurological pharmacy, pediatric pharmacy and more.

"Our curriculum provides a rigorous and contemporary education for our student pharmacists, preparing them to be competent and successful in their career paths," Skomo said.

Additionally, the School of Pharmacy's Office of Experiential Education maintains relationships with preceptors in 45-plus areas of pharmacy. During their final year, Pharm.D. students have *seven* practice experiences in traditional and non-traditional settings and are individually mentored through the process of selecting these experiences based on their career goals.

For Sulkowski, the knowledge, skills and experience she gained from the Pharm.D. program at Duquesne has helped her excel both professionally and personally.

"I am thankful for my Duquesne 'family' of professors, mentors and pharmacy friends I continue to learn from as I progress through my career," she said.

Conklin added: "I've always felt that the best part of a Duquesne education is the focus on the whole individual. Whether we work in direct care settings with patients or strive to improve the patient experience from behind the scenes, our ability to be kind, personally responsible and respectful allows us to distinguish ourselves as Duquesne pharmacists." ♦



Visit duq.edu/magazine to learn more about diverse career opportunities in pharmacy.

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