

## Impostor Syndrome: Transitioning from Student to Resident

First day of rounds – my heart raced in excitement at the opportunity to finally practice as a pharmacist. After 4 years of pharmacy school, I was ready to apply the skills and knowledge I had learned. However, the further I walked toward the team for rounds, the more I felt my heart sink to my stomach. I found the team huddled around a computer discussing which antibiotic to initiate for a patient with sepsis, a very serious matter. When they looked at me, I froze like a deer in the headlights because, at that moment, I felt like a fraud. I began thinking to myself, “What am I doing here? I don’t know anything; there must have been a mistake. I don’t belong here!”

“Impostor syndrome” is the name given to the fear that others will discover you are not as smart, capable, or creative as they think you are.<sup>1</sup> It is currently estimated that 70% of people will have at least one episode of impostor syndrome in their lives.<sup>2</sup> This syndrome is more common in people who begin new positions.<sup>3</sup> To me as I began my residency, it seemed as though I was entirely alone in my confusion and how to react and proceed in certain situations. However, toward the end of my first year, I learned about impostor syndrome from medical students. Unlike my experience and that of many other pharmacy school students, medical school students are taught about impostor syndrome and various strategies to mitigate it on the first day of medical school because of the resultant burnout associated with it.

My newfound knowledge of impostor syndrome that first year of residency validated my feelings of anxiety and assured me they were normal. In fact, I was not alone. Moreover, having a name for this uncertainty gave me the ability to face this self-doubt and acknowledge it. We need to address this sensation; otherwise, this syndrome can lead to burnout, anxiety, and depression in health care professionals.<sup>4</sup> Although there are no exact solutions to overcome this dilemma, here are some steps to address impostor syndrome:

- Acknowledge it.<sup>5</sup>
- Talk to your mentors.<sup>3,5</sup>
- Remember what you do well.<sup>3,5</sup>
- Realize no one is perfect.<sup>3,5</sup>
- Think incrementally.<sup>3,5</sup>

Even as I complete my second year of residency, I continue to battle this syndrome. I often wish that I had been informed about impostor syndrome during pharmacy school. Just as medical students are taught this syndrome on their first day of medical school, pharmacy students should be exposed to it right away. To provide the best care possible, pharmacists should consider using this concept of impostor syndrome to facilitate discussion and instill confidence in the education and skills that new pharmacists have acquired.

Have you experienced impostor syndrome during your residency? What steps have you taken to address how you feel? Do you feel as if impostor syndrome will go away with time? Would you feel comfortable going to your mentors to discuss this? Address comments to [resfel@list.accp.com](mailto:resfel@list.accp.com), and start a discussion!

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**References:**

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