

Ready or Not

You follow the light at the end of the tunnel and complete your postgraduate training. Then you land a real, honest to goodness clinical pharmacist position. All those years of hard work have finally come to an end, and you're ready to start making some money at a "real job." But wait ... it's not that simple. Post-training life can be exciting for some and scary for others, or even exciting one minute and scary the next. I thought the transition was going to be a breeze, but then I remembered that I was going to be 100% accountable for every decision I make from here on. No more residency directors, no more preceptors, no more security blankets. Suddenly, panic settled in – *what was I going to do now?* Fast forward 1 year, and I can now tell you from experience that the transition really wasn't that bad. It took some getting used to, but I can say that I feel every bit as capable on my own now as I did when I was a resident with my security blankets. However, I have learned several things along the way that may help make your transition a little smoother:

It's still OK to say you don't know.

As a resident, I was always taught to avoid guessing when asked a question I didn't know the answer to. We guess because we don't want to look stupid. On the contrary, guessing an answer can do more damage than just making us look like we don't know what we're doing, especially if it affects patient safety. By now, you've probably learned the importance of simply saying "I don't know, but I'll look it up" when you truly don't know the answer. As a resident, it's OK to do this; it's even encouraged by most preceptors. But is it still OK to say you don't know after you've graduated to become a full-fledged, independently practicing pharmacist? YES! Although you've completed one, maybe two, years of residency, the fact is, pharmacy practice as we know it is constantly changing. Things you've learned during the year are eventually going to be outdated by new, current research and guidelines. Will you always know everything about every medication you're asked about? Absolutely not. Will you always remember everything you learned as a resident? Probably not. But knowing where to find that information when you've forgotten or simply don't know it is far more valuable than taking a chance and giving wrong information. No one can fault you for looking things up, but they can definitely fault you for jumping the gun and being wrong.

Pharmacy is a lifelong learning career.

When I asked for last-minute advice before I left the residency, one of the very last things my favorite preceptor told me was, "What you learn after this is your responsibility; it's up to you now." This is something that has stayed with me throughout my first year as a junior clinician. It's true; now that I'm on my own, no one is directing which guidelines I should read, and there are no topic discussions to prepare for every week. I am responsible for my own learning. Pharmacy is always changing, which means there is always something new developing and something new to learn. No one is going to tell you what to read up on, but if you want to be the most effective pharmacist, it's important to continue to learn and stay current.

How involved you want to be is up to you.

As a resident, you're probably used to being a member of multiple organizations and committees. You might have even taken on leadership roles in some of them. Sometimes, whether you liked it or not, it was a mandatory requirement of your program to participate. But after residency, which organizations and committees you want to be part of is up to you. On the one hand, I know pharmacists who are happy coming to work, doing their job, and going home. On the other hand, I also know pharmacists active in multiple national organizations who are constantly looking for new projects even before they finish their current ones and who never seem to stop working. The point is, no one is going to *make* you

do anything anymore. You can choose to be the former or the latter. You're the captain of your ship now, so steer wherever your compass directs you.

Clinical + Operations = Complete Pharmacist.

Some residents have the idea that completing residency training exempts them from staffing responsibilities in their future jobs. After all, you did a residency to develop *clinical* skills, and now you're ready to put them to the test. Many programs have a built-in staffing component for a reason. Residency training isn't just supposed to develop your clinical skills – it's also supposed to mold you into a more well-rounded pharmacist, which means also knowing the ins and outs of production. No matter how awesome your clinical skills, they are not useful unless you can bring your recommendations to fruition, which means also knowing how pharmacy operations work. Every institution has different processes, so even if your role is more clinical, don't be afraid to take a few staffing shifts too!

It's OK to ask for help.

We have heard of (or have actually been in) this scenario before: a husband and wife pull their car over after realizing they've been lost for hours, but the husband refuses to ask for directions. So they continue on their path, aimlessly, and maybe never get to their destination. Why are people so afraid to ask for help? As a resident, when you got stuck and couldn't find the information you were looking for, you probably had resources to turn to. Maybe it was a coresident or a preceptor. But, now that you're going to be on your own, what will you do? Phone a friend (or multiple friends)! Graduating from residency doesn't mean you lose the resources you used to have – they just take on a different form. Your coresidents simply turn into your coworkers, and your preceptors turn into your colleagues. Even though you've completed residency training, chances are you haven't seen it all. Luckily, there is always someone else who *has* seen it or has at least looked it up before. Even experienced practitioners still reach out to others for help – ACCP PRN members can attest to that. Don't be afraid to ask for help – you'll find that most people are happy to assist. I mean, even Kevin Durant didn't win the NBA championship on his own. Teamwork makes the dream work.

About the Author: Duchess Domingo is originally from Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. She earned her Pharm.D. degree from Nova Southeastern University and went on to complete a PGY1 pharmacy practice residency at Broward Health Medical Center. After taking a special interest in pediatrics, she pursued a PGY2 pediatrics specialty residency at the University of Illinois at Chicago. After PGY2 training, she had the opportunity to return to sunny south Florida and is now working as a pediatric intensive care unit pharmacist at Golisano Children's Hospital of Southwest Florida.