

Pharmacy Compounding *Leader*

From the Alliance for Pharmacy Compounding • Winter 2021

Compounder, elevate thyself


There's an old saying: "You can't talk your way out of a problem you behaved your way into." But professionally, it's worse than that.

As a pharmacy compounder, you can't talk your way out of a reputation that the worst actors in your profession have behaved *their* way into. Like it or not, how you're perceived depends, in part, on your competitors' behavior. Every negative compounding story in the news is a story about *you*.

That's why it's crucial for all of us — the ethical, professional compounders who comprise the vast majority of this profession — to practice with the highest integrity in the face of these bad actors. We must all act ethically, do it con-

sistently, and make our commitment to ethical behavior clear to patients and the public.

That's why APC has adopted a new **Compounder Code of Ethics** to create a north star of ethical behavior for the profession. And yes, we're asking you to commit yourself to it when you join or renew your membership.

"Ethical behavior" is more than simply not behaving badly — it's a commitment to the communities we live in. In these pages, meet five APC members who personify different facets of that ideal of ethical behavior. They're living the Code in ways that burnish the reputation of all compounders. 

NETWORKING LEADERSHIP

Tim Fensky, RPh

Marlborough, Massachusetts

Chief pharmacy officer at Sullivan's Health Care

For Tim Fensky, it's a simple proposition: If you get involved, you can change things. Nobody had to tell him. You might say he learned it on the job.

Early in his career, he started representing his pharmacy at meetings with other independents. He was excited to attend these gatherings because he craved new ideas and learning from colleagues. But his excitement quickly turned to disappointment when he realized that the meetings were little more than gripe sessions. When he'd try to chime in, some of them would shoot him down: "You're not an owner."


"It got to the point where it was

not worth my time to hear all these complaints," Fensky says. But he didn't quit. He thought of a way to change things. He started inviting new people to the meetings. It took some time, but eventually the groups became less of an "old boys' network" and more of a collaborative association. He's made plenty of contacts, he says, and he knows that if he needs something or has a question, he has plenty of people to call. That kind of network is a benefit of getting involved.

He's applied that ethic to every group he's in. He stays active in many organizations, now serving as president of the National Association of



Boards of Pharmacy. He does all this on top of a busy full-time job. It's a balancing act, but one that he gladly does.

"I take what I learn, and I bring it back to the pharmacy," Fensky says. "If you choose not to get involved you don't have a voice. It's an investment of time in your business." 

From the Alliance for Pharmacy Compounding
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ADVOCACY LEADERSHIP

Jeff Bray, CPhT, MBA

Salt Lake City

CEO, MedQuest Pharmacy

2020 George and Lucy Malmberg Compounding Advocacy Champion

Jeff Bray had no idea what he was getting into.

Bray, who has been CEO of Salt Lake City-based MedQuest Pharmacy since 2012, got a call a few years ago from a longtime pharmacy colleague who said only that he needed Bray to come to Washington. Bray agreed, and before he could ask questions, the caller hung up. For a few minutes, he had no idea when or why he was going to Washington. The mystery was cleared up soon enough; his friend was asking



him to visit Capitol Hill to lobby for pharmacy compounding.

That's when true panic set in, Bray says, laughing. A man who describes himself as an "extreme introvert" was headed to the nation's capital to speak to powerful strangers. "I could think of nothing worse," he says.

And just a few years later, he was recognized by APC for his advocacy efforts. Personality overhaul? Not at all, Brays says. "I'm still the same quirky guy," he says, "but I realized it's not about me. It's about our patients."

Bray has adapted his advocacy efforts to fit his personality. He fervently believes that advocacy is more about relationships, not results. Results are important, of course, but Bray thinks that establishing relationships leads to results. When he walks through a door, he says, "the most important person in the room is the first person who greets you." Don't just make a beeline for the decision-makers, he says. He believes in getting to know everyone he encounters.

Years ago, when making the rounds at the Utah state house, he got to know a legislative assistant in one of the offices. He learned her name, as he did many others, and spoke to her whenever he was in the building. After a while, he didn't see her anymore; he figured she'd moved on to a new job. Later, he ran into her at a reception. She told him she'd left to go back to school and added, "I want you to meet my father." It turned out that her dad was a member of Congress. Through what have seemed like an unimportant connection, he forged a new relationship, and it was a lasting lesson.

"I'm out to advocate for compounding pharmacy," he says. "I still get nervous, but I go in prepared. My goal is to build the relationship. And I'll tell you, if an extreme introvert from Utah can do this, anyone can do this." 🇺🇸

You'll find the complete Code of Ethics on page 4 and at [A4PC.org/code](https://www.a4pc.org/code)

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Barbara Exum, PharmD

Richmond, Virginia

Associate professor and director of the Center for Compounding Practice and Research, Virginia Commonwealth University School of Pharmacy

It's not Barbara Exum's official title at Virginia Commonwealth University, but it may be the perfect description of her job: Exum is an ambassador for compounding.

She has loved compounding since her student days, and that affection only increased through years working in a hospital pharmacy and in the home infusion corporate setting. But now, back at the university where she earned her degrees, she's sharing her passion for compounding with students.

At VCU's School of Pharmacy Center for Compounding Practice and Research, students are getting experience they used to have to pull together on the job.

"I am so excited to teach our students about compounding so they can go out and be gainfully employed," she says. "This program is combining all the didactic with real therapeutic experience. They get to use everything they've learned in pharmacy school."

Exum is excited about the idea of turning out a gener-

"Compounding is really a holistic experience. It touches on so many areas of patient care."

Loyd Allen, RPh, PhD

Edmond, Oklahoma

Editor-in-chief of the *International Journal of Pharmaceutical Compounding*; CEO, Midwest Institute of Research and Technology; professor emeritus at the University of Oklahoma HSC College of Pharmacy.

After 55 years as a registered pharmacist, Loyd Allen is still learning. It's not that he's slow – far from it. What keeps him active and engaged at 77 is that he's never stopped learning, mentoring, teaching, researching, and writing about compounding pharmacy.

And he never stopped practicing, even during a full-time career as a pharmacy professor. "I worked in the pharmacy nights and weekends," he says, "and I incorporated that into the classroom. I'd talk about something, and I'd say, 'Last week at the pharmacy...' My students knew I was always connected to the practice of pharmacy."

All this work stems from a career based on a passion for patient care. Compounding, Allen says, allows a pharmacist to take care of patients in the most compassionate manner. Whether he's teaching or practicing, he stays true to some rock-solid core beliefs.

"Of course, you always abide by the law," he says. "But really, that's just bare basics. You always keep in mind

that you are serving the patient. You don't cut corners. If you don't have ethics, you have no business in compounding."

Allen believes that "the patient factor" is the most important consideration for a compounder, although he admits that can sometimes be a frustration. "You're stuck between what is reasonably, scientifically valid and what is reasonable for the patient. You don't have a year to work on something, and that's where ethics comes in."

He's seen plenty of changes in 55 years, he says, and he anticipates



more changes in the future. "I think a lot of pharmacy may be automated. But compounding is problem-solving. It's a different world." 

"You always keep in mind that you are serving the patient. You don't cut corners. If you don't have ethics, you have no business in compounding."




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ation of experienced, knowledgeable compounders. Her students learn the "why" along with the lessons from the classroom. "I see the light bulbs turning on," Exum says. "You can just see it on their faces."

In the end, it's all about the patients, and by increasing pharmacists' knowledge and confidence, those patients are better served, Exum says. "Students are gaining a competence level that is assuring patient safety. Compounding is really a holistic experience. It touches on so many areas of patient care."

Exum's excitement extends beyond students. VCU offers a three-day compounding course that serves as an introductory, refresher, and compliance course for a variety of pharmacy professionals.

Sharing her love of compounding is extremely fulfilling, Exum says. "I love that compounding is not an afterthought anymore. It's moving to the forefront." 



Gopesh Patel, RPh

New York, New York

Owner and pharmacist in charge of New Drug Loft (Manhattan) and VLS Pharmacy (Brooklyn)


Compounding, says Gopesh Patel, is an exact science. But while chemistry is the focus under the hood, Patel's goal, always, is to keep patients at center of everything he does in his two busy New York pharmacies.

"Patients trust me and my team because we do our best to keep the humanity in pharmacy," Patel says. "We realize that we are dealing with actual humans who have needs, questions, and concerns. We listen to people, we hold their hands, and we build relationships." That approach is central to how he's built a thriving business. "I have had some of the same customers for almost four decades."

Patel's commitment to his community has been tested during the pandemic. Early on, he was diagnosed with Covid-19. "I was out for 17 days. I have never felt so terrible in my entire life," he says. While recovering, he decided to take every opportunity to help others through the crisis. "VLS has offered Covid tests since the moment they became available. We do about 100 daily. I also compounded hundreds of bottles of hand sanitizer when it was unable elsewhere and we gifted it to our FedEx drivers, front line workers, patients,

and really, anyone who needed it."

Later, he was contacted by hospitals that were facing drug shortages, and his compounding expertise saved the day. "It feels good to be able to help our community and to feel useful in a time when so much feels out of our control," he says.

It's important for a compounder to have a solid foundation while changing with the times, Patel says. "Core standards or values – things like honesty, integrity and compassion – have not changed. We have invested in technology and training while maintaining the traits we are known for in our community: compassion, concern, kindness, and generosity." 



The Pharmacy Compounder's Code of Ethics

As a pharmacy compounding professional, I will:

- Uphold the triad relationship – patient, prescriber and pharmacist – as the foundation of pharmacy practice, acting in patients' best interest by collaborating with patients, their caregivers, and other healthcare professionals to manage a patient's treatment.
- Comply with all applicable state and federal laws and regulations.
- Practice the art and science of pharmacy compounding with competence and integrity, assuring patient safety and the quality of compounds, maintaining accurate records, and utilizing the proper compounding facilities, equipment, and materials in compounding for the benefit of patients.
- Recognize the limits of my own expertise, practice only if I am fit and competent to do so, and refer to colleagues on issues beyond my knowledge and skill.
- Continually improve the quality of my work by keeping my knowledge and skills up to date via continuing education that enhances my practice.
- Assist my healthcare colleagues, sharing information and ideas both to serve the best interests of the patient and to enhance our individual skills.
- Provide care to my patients without discriminating on the basis of age, race, color, nationality, religion, gender, or disability.
- In instances in which I may have a conscientious objection to providing a compounded medication, ensure that patients are promptly referred to an alternate pharmacy compounding professional who will provide the prescribed medication to the patient.
- Assure the credibility of the pharmacy compounding profession by avoiding conflicts of interest and not engaging in business practices that are detrimental to the patient, my colleagues, or my profession.
- Be an ambassador for pharmacy compounding, advancing my profession not only by demonstrating the highest ethical behavior but also by advocating for pharmacy compounding to patients, policymakers, news media, and others in my community.



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