



*ASHPOfficial* - Exploring a Pharmacy Technician Leader's Journey in Pharmacy Practice and His Experiences as a Gay Man: An Interview with Glen Gard  
Transcript

Announcer:

Welcome to the *ASHPOfficial Podcast*, your guide to issues related to medication use public, health and the profession of pharmacy.

Daniel Cobaugh:

Joining us for ASHP's Practice Journeys podcast. This podcast invites members to share their stories about their professional path, lessons learned, and how their experiences shaped who and where they are today. My name is Daniel Cobaugh. I'm the editor-in-chief of AJHP and the Vice President of Publishing at ASHP. I will be your host today for the ASHP Practice Journeys podcast.

Daniel Cobaugh:

In recognition of Pride, ASHP will host four podcasts with LGBTQ leaders in pharmacy this month. With me today is Glen Gard. Thanks for joining us today, Glen. Let's get started talking about your journey as a pharmacy technician and a leader in the field who also happens to be a gay man. Good morning, how are you Glen?

Glen Gard:

Morning, Dan. I'm well, thanks. How are you?

Daniel Cobaugh:

I'm well, thank you. First, I hope that you and Brio and your entire family, and all your loved ones have been doing okay throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. I hope everyone is well and healthy.

Glen Gard:

Thank you, Dan. It's great to talk to you today. Unfortunately, it's not in-person at the summer meeting in light of COVID and the pandemic. Yes, my husband and close friends have all been fortunate enough to be able to quarantine. My mother, she works for organizations that have taken the extra steps to have an adequate supply of PPE. So, she's been safe, even while working and caring for patients. I hope you and everyone in your family is okay, especially your mother has been in my thoughts.

Daniel Cobaugh:



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Thanks so much, Glen. Yeah, everybody's been well, so we're, keeping our fingers crossed and we're really thankful for that. So, thank you though. Thanks so much for your thoughts.

Daniel Cobaugh:

Let's get started just by getting to know you a bit. Where did you grow up?

Glen Gard:

Yeah, so I grew up in Illinois in a suburb of Chicago, about 15 minutes Northwest of the city in a town called Algonquin. It was a really great place to grow up as a kid. There were a lot of rolling hills and nature trails. There's a large recreational river there. And we had a boat when I was young, so we'd spend a lot of time on the water. I attended parochial schools, private schools, and through grade school, through prep school. My prep school was about a 30 minute drive from our home in a more rural part of the state, Woodstock. I mean, for those of you who have seen the movie Groundhog Day, the square there is where they filmed that movie. I feel very fortunate to have had such an amazing childhood and I really do recognize privilege and charm that came with my early years. Even despite my mother raising me as a single mother after my father's death.

Daniel Cobaugh:

Glen, I'm so sorry to hear that you lost your father as a child. Did you have siblings?

Glen Gard:

I do. I have one older brother.

Daniel Cobaugh:

One older brother. So that must've been growing up, after your loss of your dad, that must have been a very special experience for you, your mother and your brother, the three of you I imagine as a family unit.

Glen Gard:

Absolutely. It's one of the events in my life, my childhood that really defines who I am today.

Daniel Cobaugh:

How old were you, Glen, when you lost your dad?



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Glen Gard:  
I was seven.

Daniel Cobaugh:  
That's very young. You say that it defines your life today, what do you mean by that?

Glen Gard:  
That experience was such a stunning loss, really made me appreciate life and really take time to enjoy and appreciate things more than I think others normally would have. Especially at such a young age, having learned that lesson it's made me a better man.

Daniel Cobaugh:  
It's really interesting to hear those insights. And that's pretty profound for such a young child to really experience a loss like that. And to take, I guess what I would call, such a mature approach to incorporating it and ensuring that you live, I guess, just the fullest life possible. And, Glen, it seems like you at a relatively young age have had a very full life. It seems like you've been really successful there. And, to be frank, I honestly don't know where to go here, because there are so many things I want to talk to you about this morning.

Daniel Cobaugh:  
I want to talk to you about your career path as a pharmacy technician because you've been extremely successful, and been a leader. And I also want to talk about how, as a gay man, your life and how it intersects with your career. But why don't we start, since you talked about your school experiences and growing up, why don't you take us a bit from there? What led you to become a pharmacy technician? And I'm really interested in your career path because, as I said, I think you've really had a very interesting path and you're clearly recognized as a leader across the United States now. I'd love to hear more.

Glen Gard:  
Yeah. I would say that my career path as a pharmacy tech has really been anything but normal. It's, certainly, been unique. My start in pharmacy was not long after my grandmother, June, moved in with us after a stroke. And I was studying journalism right around the time all of the newspapers and magazines began to close and fail. And I was a bit lost with what to do with my life. And my mother suggested that I think about a healthcare career. She really wanted me to



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be a nurse like herself, but knew that my aversion to bodily fluids would not be an ideal match with that profession.

Glen Gard:

So, around that time by chance, she was caring for a pharmacy tech's mother in the health system, and struck up a conversation about me. One thing led to another, and I found myself working in that health system pharmacy initially as an unlicensed volunteer, getting a feel for it. And then, as a per diem pharmacy tech with a registration with the state. And then, eventually navigated through nearly every position a pharmacy tech would have in a health system. I performed med rec, I worked in a clinic, I performed serial compounding and HD compounding, I was a purchaser. I could keep going on with the list of job duties and titles that I held.

Glen Gard:

The director of pharmacy in that health system, at the time, was a really big proponent of advancing pharmacy technicians and truly using them to their max ability allowed by law. He involved me in a range of things from C-Suite meetings, he enlisted me to write policy, he allowed me to form a pharmacy technician committee that had pharmacy techs from all campuses join and work through technician issues, and schedules, and things like that. He put me on an interdisciplinary team that designed a brand-new hospital, and many other activities that really led me to my current position I hold now at Option Care Health.

Daniel Cobaugh:

So, how long were you there in that particular health system, Glen?

Glen Gard:

I was there shortly after I transitioned to Option Care Health as a per diem. But full-time, I want to say, I worked seven or eight years for that particular health system.

Daniel Cobaugh:

And what made you make that transition? And what helped you decide to make your transition over to Option Care Health?

Glen Gard:

Well, a big part of it was I did work for a different number of health systems per diem, while working full-time at my main health system to see what their experiences were like, their



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workflows, to try to learn from others to see what other possibilities or opportunities were out there. And what I really discovered at that time was I had already reached a zenith. I had done it all, I had been part of everything that I could imagine being part of in a traditional health system. And so, I just began looking in the pharmacy field, but outside of hospitals.

Glen Gard:

And I was fortunate enough to work with, who at the time was, the former director, national director of pharmacy services for, what was then called, Walgreens Infusion Services. I really didn't know much about home health, or home infusion. And my conversations with him really broadened my idea of what you could do in pharmacy and how you can care for patients. And so, the opportunity arised to work for him at what, then, transitioned from Walgreens to its own company, Option Care. And I took the opportunity and saw the possibility of expanding my scope of practice learning from new mentors, and learning a new field of pharmacy.

Daniel Cobaugh:

It's really, as I said in the opening, an amazing career path that you've had. And I think you really are an inspiration for many other pharmacy technicians to show really the breadth of opportunities available to them. And I think that you're also an inspiration another way in that as a leader in pharmacy, and who also happens to be a gay man. But as we celebrate Pride this month and tell the stories of ASHP members, I think, it would be great as we share your story.

Daniel Cobaugh:

And I'm sort of wondering that classic question that we all get at some point, how old were you when you knew, or how old were you when you came out? But, as a child growing up in a small town outside of Chicago, were you aware that you were gay? What was your experience like? Where did your journey start?

Glen Gard:

I began to recognize that I didn't like girls, or have the same feeling towards the opposite sex as some of my friends probably starting in third grade. And my understanding and acceptance of what that was that I was feeling evolved from there until really the early years of college. I think I really knew not long after meeting my second cousin, when I was 13, what gay was, and that I was beginning to identify as that. He was very first open and unapologetic gay man I met. He also happens to be HIV positive for over 27 years now. And he was a real influence on me in



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those early years, seeing my family and close family friends really not care that he was gay. It was like it didn't matter.

Glen Gard:

And my mother recently told me a story about her cousin and his mother, my great aunt and how she disowned him when he came out in the early '80s. But my grandmother, my mother's mom, June, who was her sister-in-law drove from Chicago to Atlanta after my second cousin had a tearful phone call with her about her son's coming out to talk sense into her. And was really a catalyst in their relationship being reconciled. My grandma June was such an amazing woman. And I think she's probably on my mind lately because it was her birthday recently.

Glen Gard:

But she grew up in the city of Chicago. Her parents owned a tavern and she was around a lot of diversity. She wore many titles throughout her life, but one of them that I always like to brag about was she was a lingerie model. She was a graduate of The Art Institute of Chicago that she attended on a full scholarship. And I was very, very close to her. She was really one of my best friends. And her and my mother and my uncle Danny, who was her son, they all knew I was gay, probably, before I even did. And they made sure that I would know in subtle ways that it was okay. And some of those ways were they showered me with extra love, and really encouraged me to be whatever it was that I wanted to be.

Daniel Cobaugh:

That's an amazing story. As someone who's probably more of the generation of your cousin and beginning their coming out journey in the 1980s for older generations, especially of gay men, lesbians bi people, transgender people, really, it wasn't necessarily always that support of a journey. But it really does sound as if you've had an incredibly supportive journey.

Daniel Cobaugh:

Did you get a chance to talk openly, then, with your grandmother about being gay? You said that she probably knew before you did, but did you have a chance to really talk to her about it?

Glen Gard:

Yeah, really one of the most unfortunate things is that around the time I was becoming more accepting of myself, and being able to say it out loud to others was around the same time she had her stroke. So, we had conversations, but she was nonverbal, but she still managed to



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show her affection and acceptance of myself. My husband had the pleasure of getting to meet her shortly before she passed away. An even without being able to say anything, sitting at the kitchen table with her and Brio, my husband, cooking dinner for her, she just smiled and looked at the two of us and touched our hands. And I knew that she was very supportive and was happy just to see how happy I was.

Daniel Cobaugh:

That's an amazing story. It's an amazing story. You said that your cousin was unapologetically gay, what do you mean by that?

Glen Gard:

Yeah, I think growing up in a suburb of Chicago we did go into the city but, certainly, we weren't going to Boystown when I was 10 years old. So, when my second cousin came over for a visit it was just he was there and his partner was with him, and there was no hiding kisses between themselves, or holding hands. It was just them being themselves, and being comfortable being with each other in front of other people. And I don't know that I really had seen that. I was young before things like *Will & Grace*, or other mainstream media events that put the LGBTQ community in a normalized light to the general public. So, it was really informative to see him and his partner just being normal people.

Daniel Cobaugh:

And yet, Glen, you talk about the fact that your mother was so supportive, your grandmother was so supportive, you saw your cousin, and you still made a comment a few minutes ago about going through the process of accepting yourself. So, even with all that support around you, there was a process to self-acceptance, which maybe that would surprise some people. I was wondering, as you tell that story, if ultimately you've been able to reconcile your being a gay man, with your faith?

Glen Gard:

Certainly, I haven't been able to reconcile it with Catholicism or the Roman Catholic Church as a whole. I'm definitely a lapsed Catholic. I see small incremental changes that I hope, at some point, in my lifetime or future generations, the Catholic Church will become more accepting. Certainly, Pope Francis has been a big part of that conversation. But I do still have faith, I identify as agnostic. Many of my close friends, my closest friend being raised similarly to myself in a very strict Catholic household, in fact, mine was not strict, but his certainly was, has really



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swung that faith pendulum because of his experiences to being an atheist. I still believe in something. I have a faith in a spiritual world, and I see a higher power but I, certainly, by no means am a Catholic anymore.

Daniel Cobaugh:

Certainly, a journey that many travel for sure. I want to talk to you a little bit about Brio. It wouldn't be a complete conversation this morning, if we didn't talk more about you and Brio you were married relatively recently. How did you guys meet?

Glen Gard:

I like to say that we met at a charity event, but it really was at a bar. There just happened to be a charity event happening there. And my friends always say to me, "Oh, that person is flirting with you." Or, "They're looking at you," and I'm always oblivious to it. And for once, really, I think it was the only time in my life I was the one who was trying to flirt and making the first move after I saw him. I was able to see the light catch his beautiful dark brown eyes. And I was just, "Who is that person?" So, I was the one who made the approach.

Glen Gard:

And, now, we're coming up on almost seven years together. And as we record this episode, we're five days away from our first year anniversary together after being married. He definitely fulfilled the old trope of opposites attract. We balance each other out very well. He's the fiery Puerto Rican, and I'm the passionate Italian. So, we both can raise our voices at one another and, to many on the outside, it sounds like we're arguing but, in reality, it's just us having a normal, everyday conversation about something as mundane as what we're going to have for dinner. And so, I couldn't imagine my life without him.

Daniel Cobaugh:

As someone who's married to an Argentinian, I can completely understand the dynamics. We frequently have friends who think that we're having a passionate argument and it's just a really good discussion. So, I get that completely.

Daniel Cobaugh:

So, when you and Brio were married about six years after the landmark Obergefell decision, the Supreme Court case that struck down same sex marriage bans across the United States. And





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you've talked about privilege a couple of times in our conversation this morning. And I guess I'm wondering, when you were planning your wedding and even maybe on your wedding day were you conscious of the changes that had happened in this country and the privilege that you had to get married that many people that preceded you didn't have the opportunity to experience?

Glen Gard:

I think we were cognizant of all that came before us to make something like this possible. To have not only a gay male couple marry, but also interracial couple. And it was, certainly, on our minds all the way from the proposal to wedding planning, to the day of, and as well as on our honeymoon. And it still is in our minds every day.

Glen Gard:

On the night of the wedding during the reception, I gave a short little speech to our guests. And I acknowledged the fact that just recently this was not possible and unheard of. And how honored we were to be able to marry each other and express our love in front of those that we love. And that it was recognized not just by our local government, or our state, but federally at a national level. And it's, certainly, something that we were passionate about. And we continue to be passionate about. We, certainly, marched and protested prior to having the landmark Supreme Court case decide at a federal level that gay marriage could be and would be legal. So, it certainly was always on our mind and continues to be on our mind.

Daniel Cobaugh:

When you start to think about how that translates into your professional life, and just the changes in society, and the advances that have occurred, have you found the profession of pharmacy to be an accepting professional home for a gay man?

Glen Gard:

In my experience, I have. I have had the fortune to work with many local and national trade organizations like ASHP that have let me see a number of practitioners from across the country, many who are of the LGBTQ community. As working for my current job, I do get to travel to our pharmacies throughout the country. And I get to have experiences with those local team members in all different types of settings. So, rural and major metro areas from San Francisco to Wilmington, North Carolina. And I've always seen, at least in healthcare and pharmacy settings, an acceptance of others. And I think that really to be part of that is just our core beliefs



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as healthcare professionals that all human life has value, and deserves to be cared for. And I think that just translates into their working relationships with their colleagues.

Daniel Cobaugh:

If you had to give advice to the next generation of LGBTQ people who are entering into the profession, entering into pharmacy as pharmacy technicians, as pharmacists, what would you say to them? What would be your advice to them for living and working as LGBTQ people in pharmacy?

Glen Gard:

Dan, I think I would offer them the same advice I give all of my colleagues. Always be willing to learn and grow, listen to your peers and mentors, and never burn a bridge because pharmacy is an incredibly small world.

Daniel Cobaugh:

Is there anything specific to being successful as an LGBTQ person that you think that they need to be cognizant of, or incorporate into their approach?

Glen Gard:

I've been thinking about that question. And from my own life experience and professional experience, aside from an occasional person calling me a name behind closed doors, which has only happened a handful of times in my professional career, and I've always had someone who had my back that was in that room, or meeting who let me know, or let HR know. Or a random person on the street, I feel like I've been fairly isolated from discrimination as a gay man. It, certainly, has not held my career back, being openly gay. I think I see more subtle discrimination and overt racism towards my husband who has darker skin than I've ever experienced as a gay man.

Daniel Cobaugh:

That's an interesting insight. I wish we could have the chance to talk to Brio as well to sort of talk about his experiences. Maybe we'll have to, on a future podcast, interview the two of you as a couple.

Daniel Cobaugh:



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So, we're doing these podcasts as part of Pride month. So, how are you and Brio going to celebrate Pride this year? I guess, it's going to be a bit different, isn't it? You made a reference earlier to Boystown. And, I guess, Boystown's not going to be quite as crowded as usual this year.

Glen Gard:

Yeah, it's certainly bizarre to be in the month of June and not have any plans at all. In the years past, we would host a party. We live in the Rogers Park community of Chicago. It's the furthest North neighborhood in the city before you get to Evanston. And they host a Pride North street event, actually, just outside of our building's front door. But, unfortunately, that won't be happening this year either. So, with Illinois being in wave three, we are allowed to have up to 10 persons in our residence at a time. So, we've actually discussed it with a few very close friends. We have a very generous sized terrace and so, we're planning on just having a small gathering, again, of our closest friends this year.

Glen Gard:

It's definitely going to be sad to not gather in Boystown for the parade and have a slushie after on the roof of Sidetrack. But I think it will have us a little bit more appreciate it next year, I suppose.

Daniel Cobaugh:

Well, it sounds like you still have a nice event planned and hopefully next year we'll be back to some normal.

Daniel Cobaugh:

Well, that's all the time we have today. I want to thank Glen Gard for joining us to discuss his journey as a pharmacy technician, a leader in pharmacy, who also happens to be a gay man. Join us here at ASHP Official and Pharmacy Practice Journey Podcast, as we learn about how LGBTQ pharmacy leaders seek out, grow and evolve during their careers.

Daniel Cobaugh:

Glen Gard, thank you so much for taking some time to talk with me today.



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Glen Gard:

Thank you, Dan. It's been a pleasure.

Announcer:

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