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Truth in Transformation

Episode 3: Stand in Your Truth

Paul: I'm your host, Paul Abramowitz, the CEO of ASHP, and with me is ASHP President Tom Johnson. Last time we had a great conversation about servant leadership—the idea of listening and putting others first. Today, we'll be talking about self-evaluation – or as you put it, Tom, – Standing in Your Truth. Why don't we start there – what do you mean by Stand in Your Truth?

Tom: Well, Paul, I've always encouraged self-reflection and honest self-assessment, but I first heard the term "Stand in Your Truth" from Sister Mary Thomas, our Vice President of Mission at Avera McKennan Hospital. So what does that mean? It means that it's important to be honest with yourself and others – to not oversell yourself, but not sell yourself short either. You need to own who you are.

Paul: I like that, Tom. I think we all could stand in our truth a lot more. So, how do you see this concept applying to our profession?

Tom: That's a great question, Paul. Sometimes we as a profession can be overly critical. We are trained to find "problems" and correct mistakes. So by nature, we tend to look at the negatives. But the positives are also significant. This concept of Stand in Your Truth reminds us not to be overly negative or overly humble about our strengths – but also not to try to be something you're not. Standing in Your Truth is about merely being honest and forthright about where you are and where you are going. I think we need that right now, especially today, as healthcare evolves at such a rapid pace.

For example, pharmacy roles have expanded immensely just over the last few months during the COVID-19 pandemic with changes in legislation on the State and National levels that have allowed pharmacists to administer tests, etc.

Paul: So it sounds like now is the perfect time for the profession to Stand in our Truth.

Tom: Well, Paul, I'd take that a step further and say that we **MUST** stand in our truth right now. Healthcare is changing. Technology is changing. Society is changing. Our truth is that we are the medication experts on the team, and our presence improves patient safety and optimizes outcomes. But do you know who knows that? We do – and not nearly enough other people.

If we want more responsibilities on the healthcare team and to be genuinely valued for our services, then we need to transform the profession and other's perceptions based on our truth.

Paul: Do you think that pharmacists have difficulty standing in their truth, and if so, why?

Tom: That's a great question Paul. I think is a mix of reasons of why pharmacists can have difficulty with owning who we are. We tend to be introverts by nature. We're fine with making a recommendation in the hallway and having the nurse or physician deliver the care to the patient. So we can be too humble at times.

The other issue we have is being too critical – of ourselves and others. I used to catch myself doing this all the time when a physician would come up with a treatment regimen I didn't agree with. Finally, I learned to force myself to see it from their angle and their way of thinking. It's not like they were trying to do something wrong. They might have had more information, or perhaps they didn't see a lab value, or maybe they didn't have as much information as I did.

So this mix of being overly humble, and perhaps overly critical, sets the stage for us to have difficulty developing an unbiased assessment of our performance. We need to be completely honest with ourselves (individually and as a profession) about what we do that adds value and brings meaningful benefits to our patients. If we can do that, then we can find the best path forward.

Paul: You noted several truths in your inaugural address. What do you think are the main points?


Tom: I talked about our unique skills and training and why that is important to our patients. But it's also important to know what we are not. I used to challenge students and residents to look at chest x-rays and CT scans before reading reports. Not because I thought they could or should be doing their own radiology reads. But rather to give them a visual reference point for what they were going to read in the report. It would help them learn and remember. So that's an example of being honest with yourself about what you could or couldn't do, but also understanding how to learn and retain information. If you aren't honest with yourself about your true skills or intentions, you can end up working on things that do not bring value.

Paul: So it's really about understanding your skills, and finding ways to help you learn and be a better member of the healthcare team?

Tom: That's exactly it. If we Stand in our Truth, we will gain confidence in our skills – confidence in our own skin – so to speak. That confidence allows us as individuals and as a profession to better engage with our patients, our colleagues, and the public in general.

Paul: What are some ways that pharmacists, pharmacy technicians, and students can learn how to stand in their truth – to step into a more prominent role on the healthcare team?

Tom: First – stop worrying about what someone else told you that you could or should do or know. Figure that out yourself and stop worrying about outside constraints. Second – talk to people about your job and be excited about what you do. You don't have to give pharmacology lectures to somebody in an elevator, but you should have a story about how you helped a

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patient today. Don't tell the stories about your frustrations with insurance carriers or an obstinate colleague – there is a time and a place for that.

Tell people about how you served someone else. Tell people about the patient you helped improve their diabetes, or tell people about the cool work you do with sterile product preparation, or tell people about how you keep patients safe by reviewing their medication orders. And finally, ask others what they think you're good at and what you need to work on. But you have to find people you trust, and that will give you honest feedback – so you might need to build some relationships first to be able to do that effectively.

Paul: Well, that's all we have time for today. Thanks, Tom, for sharing your thoughts and insights about how to Stand in Your Truth. I encourage everyone to read Tom's inaugural address, which can be found on ashp.org. Join us next time when Tom explores the topic of transformational presence.

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