BOOK REVIEW

William N. Kelly and Elliott M. Sogol. *The Good Pharmacist: Characteristics, Virtues, and Habits*. Oldsmar, Florida: William N. Kelly Consulting, Inc.; 2011. 157 pp, \$16.95 (softcover), ISBN 978-0-615-39321-6.

Reviewed By: Teresa E. Donegan, PhD
D'Youville College School of Pharmacy

“What is a good pharmacist?” The authors of *The Good Pharmacist: Characteristics, Virtues, and Habits* attempt to address this elusive question by asking physicians, nurses, patients, and other pharmacists to identify what qualities they think make a pharmacist “good.” This book, which is based on a 5-year study, gives credence to the voices of patients, pharmacists, and collaborators of health care in identifying the characteristics, virtues, and habits of a good pharmacist and suggests that educators, admissions committees, and employers use these insights when developing criteria for recruitment and training of students and pharmacists.

This book is divided into 10 brief and readable chapters that raise relevant questions related to the main one, which is “what makes a pharmacist good?” and then “what can educators, employers, and professional organizations do to promote the development of good pharmacists?”

Chapters 1 through 4 discuss the key qualities that make pharmacists “good” using descriptive data from a qualitative study as well as comments of those nominated from survey respondents as good pharmacists. Pharmacists, physicians, nurses, and patients were asked, via a survey, to list 3 adjectives, in order of importance, that describe a good pharmacist. Participants also were invited to nominate a professional whom they considered to be a good pharmacist and to provide an example of when and how the pharmacist displayed the qualities that made him or her good. “Fast, productive and accurate” were not at the top of anyone’s list. “Caring, compassionate, knowledgeable, and responsive” were words used frequently to describe qualities and characteristics of a good pharmacist.

Chapter 5 looks at the status of the current pharmacy profession in relation to both its desire and capacity to

provide patient-centered care. This chapter sheds some light on possible barriers to care, including patients’ limited perceptions of what pharmacists can offer and practitioners’ fears about counseling patients. It also mentions that state boards of pharmacy are concerned that pharmacists are not fulfilling their legal obligations to provide appropriate patient counseling.

Entitled “Making Good Pharmacists,” Chapter 6 is directed to those who aspire to reach the standard of care that patients seek in a pharmacist. Are admissions committees successful in identifying students who have the potential to be good pharmacists? To what extent do educational curricula focus on the attributes that go beyond scientific foundation and clinical skills? The most critical question is “Can virtues be taught?” “Can you teach people to care?”

The authors include the survey instrument in Chapter 7 and encourage pharmacists to complete it to compare themselves to those identified as good pharmacists. While the survey instrument used was not tested for statistical viability, it could be useful in generating discussions in classrooms and work environments about qualities that patients, pharmacists, and other health care providers seek in a good pharmacist.

In the remaining chapters, 8 through 10, the book identifies the main challenges that impede pharmacists from being good pharmacists and suggests ways to address them. One of the key problems is how pharmacists identify their role. If they believe their main aim is to quickly and accurately dispense medication, they will set their priorities on this aim. The book ends on an idealistic note, asking readers to imagine the impact the profession could make on improving health outcomes if most pharmacists were “good.”

While reading through the chapters, some readers may say the content is all just common sense; however, the question remains: is patient-centered care common practice? This book would be helpful to educators and professional leaders who are striving for a higher standard of care in pharmacy.

Corresponding Author: Teresa E. Donegan, PhD, D'Youville College School of Pharmacy, 320 Porter Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14201. Tel: 716-829-8435. E-mail: donegant@dyc.edu