Featured Mentor

MentorVIEW with

Ron Cameron, RPh
Founder & CEO
Cameron & Company

In January of 1970, pharmacist Ron Cameron became a pioneer. That's when he created Cameron & Company, Pharmacy's first temporary staffing firm. Nearly 40 years later, at the age of 72 and celebrating his 50th year in pharmacy, Ron Cameron is still pioneering ways to serve the profession he has loved since earning his pharmacy degree from the University of Pittsburgh. (See Ron Cameron, University of Pittsburgh Distinguished Alumni Recipient, 2002, at http://www.temp-pharmacist.com/pdfs/2002award.pdf).

PharmacyNOW caught up with Ron – who, appropriately, is an avid traveler -- just before he departed for Scotland. We asked him to share his innovative views on pharmacy past, present, and future.

PN: What significant changes in pharmacy have you noted over your career?
RC: "There have been a lot of changes. And a huge increase in demand for staffing services. Clients can't fill staffing needs like they used to. It's due to the short supply of pharmacists, which is affected by the shortage of faculty. Universities can't turn out enough pharmacists. Also, automation has changed the industry. When I became a pharmacist in 1957, you had just a typewriter and label. Computers only appeared on the scene about 25 years ago …."

PN: Is today's pharmacist different from the previous generation?
RC: "Absolutely. The PharmD has helped the profession immensely. These Pharmacists are much more professional and knowledgeable. They possess a deeper understanding of Pharmacology – and their academic work is two years longer. The Doctor of Pharmacy degree has been well worth the effort."

PN: What do you like best about being a pharmacist?
RC: "It's prestigious. We are always the most respected profession out there. The public's perception of pharmacists is very positive."

PN: You mentioned you like the PharmD degree. What don't you like about it?
RC: "Frankly, I don't like the PharmD designation. If people hear RN, they know it's nursing. MD, physician. DDS, dentist. If they hear PharmD – they don't have a clue. They don't recognize that we are Doctors of Pharmacy. DP might be better."

PN: As you pull from your 40-years of staffing expertise, what are the keys to keeping talented pharmacists?
RC: First and foremost, pharmacists are looking for money and benefits. This is true for us, and for our clients -- who are also employers. You have to out-pay others. At Cameron & Company, we try to stay in the lead with compensation and benefits – and we also offer employee stock ownership. We're pharmacist owned, managed, and operated – plus, we're all partners. Having ownership in Cameron & Company helps us keep good people. So, compensation is important. But that's not all. Pharmacists need to like what they do. For people who are primarily interested in providing patient care, workplace variety, and who like a change of pace, a career with us is very satisfying. We try to reach out to those types of pharmacists, because they'll likely find our workplaces enjoyable.

PN: Do employers in healthcare have a clear focus on staff retention?
RC: "I sort of doubt it. With the heavy demand for pharmacists, and other medical professions, I sense the main interest and top priority is in getting the shifts filled."

PN: What final words would you like to offer to the young pharmacist just starting out?
RC: "You have chosen a great profession. Keep diversifying, and get involved with medication therapy management. Pharmacy is a lifelong profession that you can be proud of."