

# ‘New Kid on the Block’ Makes his Mark

## John Kollhoff, PharmD

GRAVES DRUG • Emporia, Kansas



Becoming an independent pharmacy owner at a young age is certainly an impressive accomplishment. However, oddly enough, such early success can sometimes create unexpected bumps in the road. Just ask John Kollhoff, PharmD.

Not long after graduating from the University of Kansas School of Pharmacy in May 2005, Kollhoff became a junior partner with Graves Drug in Emporia, Kansas, working with pharmacy owner Glen Hadaway, RPh.

Of course, just being out of school meant that he was facing a challenge familiar to many recent graduates—money. “I came out of school with no money in the bank, and a huge stack of loans,” he says. Also, as a new guy on the block in his mid-20s, Kollhoff had to prove himself with the clientele.

“When I first started at Graves, many of our ‘more experienced’ patients wanted nothing to do with me,” he says. “They wanted Glen. Glen has been their pharmacist for 30 years, and by God, they wanted to talk to him, not some young kid.”

However, Kollhoff says the pros outweighed the cons. For example, becoming a junior partner and building equity helped ease his financial crunch. And as for the patients, they eventually came around.

“By getting to know your patients and taking a sincere interest in their health, they realize that you are looking out for their best interest,” he says. “And there is nothing more rewarding than helping to take care of people.”

Among Kollhoff’s responsibilities at Graves Drug is working closely with the Flint Hills Community Health Center (FHCHC) on its 340B drug pricing program. The 340B program, administered by the Health Resources and Services Administration, allows hospitals, community health centers, clinics, and other safety net providers to purchase outpatient pharmaceuticals at discounted pricing, thereby

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expanding access to care to low-income and vulnerable segments of the population.

“As the provider pharmacy for the FHCHC, we were responsible for formulary development at the outset and management from day-to-day,” Kollhoff says. “We essentially store the medication for FHCHC, which owns the medication, and dispense it to their patients upon prescription. We are responsible for collecting the payments on their behalf and remitting them on a monthly basis. We are then paid a flat fee per prescription. We are very fortunate to have them. They provide an incredible service to the city and surrounding area based on the patients’ ability to pay.”

Kollhoff says Graves has a strong compounding practice, and his interest in that area has increased since he joined the pharmacy.

“Long before I came into the picture, one of our pharmacists saw the promising future in compounding,” he says. “When you compound for a person, you are providing a product and service that just isn’t available everywhere.

Many times as a compounder, you are a patient’s last resort for some relief. Whether that means providing pain relief to a terminal cancer patient, or helping a patient’s dog take their medicine (hint—bacon flavor!), there are many rewards to compounding, both tangible and spiritual.”

Kollhoff offers a few words of advice for young pharmacists who aspire toward ownership. He suggests talking to as many independent pharmacists as possible, even if they are undecided about ownership. “You will almost always learn from these interactions, and you may just find the perfect store for you,” he says.

“I hope that every student strongly considers ownership after graduation,” he says. “Use your time in school to explore the myriad options available. I know that the big chains are out there waving money and cars in your faces, begging you to work for them (and their shareholders). However, when you are an owner, *you* decide how your business will work and how you can best serve your patients, and then you can personally reap the benefits of your hard work and ingenuity.”