

PHARMACY: Mustang Drug, in Mustang, Okla., which is part of the TotalDose regional franchise

EDUCATION: Oklahoma University College of Pharmacy, 2016

AUSPICIOUS BEGINNINGS: “I started my career in the biotech industry making diagnostic tests for fungal diseases. I was involved in research and development as well as production and did that for about five years and I loved every moment of it. However, something was always missing from my days. I always wondered about the patients whose samples I was testing. I was missing the patient interaction. I started exploring different paths in health care and in sales. I shadowed a pharmacist in an independent business, and I knew that was the path that I wanted to pursue. Our group at Mustang Drug consists of four members (three pharmacists and one technician) and together we own six pharmacies in four states. Mustang Drug is ‘my baby’ and the first store that I owned, and I’m currently the director of compounding and wellness of the TotalDose franchise.

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES, BOTH PREDICTABLE AND UNPREDICTABLE: “As independent pharmacists, we find ourselves facing lower payment rates and constantly increasing DIR fees, which can impact our profit margins. It’s imperative that we find a way to increase our profit margins by diversifying the services that we offer such as medsync, adherence packaging, compounding, wellness consultations and a TotalDose supplement line. To do that, we had to adopt pharmacy management software.

We have other predictable challenges that each of our locations deal with separately, as well. Staffing can be challenging, especially in our rural locations. Offering competitive salaries and benefits packages can help attract and retain talented pharmacy staff. We also have a community residency program that helps us recruit talented pharmacy students, train them and make sure they fit within our group.

Unfortunately, sometimes we are faced with unpredictable challenges. Recently one of our locations suffered from storm damage and had to stop all operations.

We are in the process of setting up a temporary location. But in the meantime, we are transferring patients to our other location that is an hour away, syncing their medications and delivering them. No matter what challenges we face, taking care of our community is always our priority.

COMMUNITIES THRIVE BECAUSE OF CHANGE

“I practice in a fast-growing suburban community located southwest of Oklahoma City. There is a strong sense of support for small businesses. The Mustang Chamber of Commerce does a great job bringing new members and involving them in community wide events. As the only independent pharmacy in town, we sponsor many school and city events and provide wellness and immunization services to the city. Communities are dynamic and evolve continuously. As independent pharmacists we need to be able to recognize that and be able to adapt and embrace change.

TRANSFERABLE KNOWLEDGE IMPROVES

WORKFLOW: “Our pharmacy workflow consists of medication dispensing, medication synchronization, compounding and inventory management. The primary focus remains on dispensing prescriptions throughout the day, providing counseling which includes supplement depletion consultations. Medsync provides convenience to our patients, less trips to the pharmacy and fewer phone calls. From my previous biotech experience, I was able to develop a more robust compounding workflow as well as training procedures that empower our technicians to become experts in compounding. Inventory management is monitored throughout the workflow by our technicians and pharmacists. We use efficient pharmacy management software to streamline every aspect of our workflow and reduce the burden on staff.”

MENTORSHIP IS A TWO-WAY STREET: “A good week is a week where my patients are taken care of, as well as my staff. A fulfilled and happy staff is always a good goal and a challenge. Mentorship is all about sharing knowledge and experience. When someone with more experience can guide you, you can learn from their successes and mistakes. It’s like getting insider tips on how to handle difficult situations.

I learned to be a mentor as well as a mentee and most importantly, I learned to recognize when a mentoring relationship develops organically whether within the pharmacy industry or beyond. Mentorship is a fantastic way to grow, learn and succeed. I believe I will always seek mentorship whether I’m the mentor or the mentee.”



Photo by M. Leigh Photography

Selma Alami, PharmD

an interview with William Richards