

PHARMACY: Altev Community Pharmacy, Avondale, Ohio. The business opened in December 2023, employs four people, and fills about 80 prescriptions per day.

EDUCATION: Graduated from the University of Toledo School of Pharmacy, 2020.

GRADUATING INTO A PANDEMIC: After graduating from pharmacy school, Emmanuel was hired at an independent pharmacy in Dayton, Ohio. They brought him in as a clinical pharmacist to help with their provider status initiative. Then the COVID-19 pandemic hit, creating a whole new level of challenge for the recent graduate.

"We were one of the few pharmacies in the whole of the state that got access to the vaccine in the phase one distribution," he says. "There were days we had clinics that we did, easily, 1,000 vaccinations."

While difficult, he says, it was a rewarding experience. "I'll never forget when I had one patient walk in. She had just lost three of her siblings to COVID-19, and just the fact that she could get [the vaccination] right there and be protected and be safe, she was so thankful."

PHARMACY ACROSS CONTINENTS: Emmanuel is a second-generation independent pharmacist. He grew up watching his late father run a pharmacy in Sagamu, Nigeria, and was drawn to both the entrepreneurship and autonomy that goes into running one as well as the service aspect. He moved to the U.S. when he was 15 years old. That gave him insight into two very different roles that pharmacies can play in communities.

When he grew up in Nigeria, Emmanuel says, pharmacies were primary health care providers. If someone was sick, they went to the pharmacy first, before seeing a doctor or going to a hospital, much like a patient in the U.S. would visit an urgent care. Pharmacists were seen as *the* medication experts.

"Pharmacists prescribed all day, but it wasn't seen as prescribing per se, because most drugs people had access to without prescriptions – even though it's not supposed to be that way," he says.

In the U.S., Emmanuel says, pharmacists have twice as much education on medications and treatment, but also have more limitations on what services they can provide. "There are situations where pharmacists can't even do anything, you can't affect a patient's life at all, all you can do is dispense," Emmanuel says.

COMMUNITY WORK: Avondale has a community council, which is an informal organization that brings community stakeholders together, and Emmanuel is at most meetings. He also participates in Avondale Day, where he offers health screenings. He sees his work behind the counter as community-oriented as well.

"We try to treat everyone that walks into our doors with the utmost care, because that's the vision, making sure that they feel cared about and they feel at home. They don't feel like they're in the big-box chain where you're just a number," Emmanuel says. "So really trying to know and have a relationship with every patient that comes in and know them by name and care about them, I think that also goes into taking care of the community and being present in the community."

"You're thinking about, 'Okay, what challenges do we have in our community? Is it smoking cessation? Is it diabetes? Is it hypertension,'" he said. "Then you start to make steps, to move the needle, to close those gaps. And in Avondale, for example, we unfortunately have just so many health inequities to be addressed. That's what keeps me going, honestly."

HOW NCPA HELPS HIM: Emmanuel says NCPA membership offers "tons of avenues to help pharmacists be good business owners. I can't even put a monetary value on how this affected my ability as a pharmacist and owner."

"Supporting legislation, constantly interacting with our congressmen or senators, whoever needs to be talked to – I see a lot of that. We're at a tipping point where things can either change or go even worse, so NCPA's role right now is so vital to making pharmacy what it's supposed to be," he said.

THE FUTURE OF PHARMACY: "As we start to leverage things like value-based care, pharmacists are going to have to be more involved in the process," he says. "We might not be doing as much filling in the pharmacies. I foresee there's going to be an uptick of things like centrifugal services for even independent pharmacy locations as well."



Emmanuel Ayanjoke, PharmD, MBA

an interview with Sam Manas