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## I Got Into Pharmacy School...Now What?

As a high school graduate in the Philippines, it's actually a lot of pressure to think about the future, which is dictated by the course you tick on the college application form you haphazardly fill out months before you graduate. But then you follow what your mother said, "get a course that can be a backup in case you don't continue to medical school." You then choose pharmacy. "That's just gonna be a lot of memorization, right? Psh, no math? I can do that!"

And then, you get into pharmacy school, but you actually have no idea what you have gotten yourself into.

No one in my family was a pharmacist. The idea just came up when they started thinking about starting a business – a pharmacy. "Pharmacy managers from a big pharmacy retail chain earn up to six digits a month!"

Yeah, right.

Here I am, a pharmacist in the Philippines, and here are 5 things you should know before going into pharmacy school:

1. There is math. A lot of it.

If you were the kind of student who preferred science over math, you might have the assumption that pharmacy would be easier for you. What you don't realize is pharmacy involves a lot of math – from chemical equations to dosage calculations. This carries over to pharmacy practice when you start to manage inventory stocks in your pharmacy or calculating the dosage for your pediatric patient. Math in pharmacy school shouldn't be overlooked, and there's gonna be a lot of it.

2. Pharmacy schools have a similar curriculum but different priorities.

For most colleges of pharmacy in the Philippines, there is one important goal for its students: to get the highest passing rate in the board exam. The way the curriculum is taught is everything has to be memorized, from the Father of Pharmacy to the mechanism of action of paracetamol. However, not all pharmacy schools teach their students problem solving and critical thinking, which, in my opinion, could go a long way into pharmacy practice.

3. You are more than just a "tindera."

The assumption of Filipinos of pharmacists is that either we 1) own and manage a pharmacy business or *botika* or 2) we are salespersons in these botikas and hence, just "botikeros/botikeras." What not a lot of people realize how much responsibility it is to be a pharmacist in whichever field of practice you decide to put your career on. Pharmacists are also counsellors and communicators, managers and leaders, and teachers and professionals. Pharmacists are also part of the health care team, and we are just as important as doctors and nurses.

4. You have a lot of career options.

One of the best things about finishing pharmacy school is you can (sometimes, quite literally) go anywhere. You can teach future pharmacists in the academe, discover the next possible cancer drug, or work in the clinical practice. Along the way in pharmacy school, you start to learn what you want to do and how you do it.

5. It's okay to take a break.

Everyone in the health or medical sciences can agree that this takes a lot of work and a lot of breakdowns. And before I scare you out of pharmacy school, just know that you can definitely take some time off and chill out. But get back up and ace that laboratory test, drug recitation, or board exam.

Now that you know what to look forward to in pharmacy school, know that you don't have to be good at all of these and that you have a bright future ahead in pharmacy. And hey, see you on the other side?