

# Gimme Five! (Or possibly two.....)

November 2003

When I meet with pharmacists of the USPHS Commissioned Corps, I often hear, “I know how busy you are, Admiral Walling. Let me know what I can do to help.” A little voice in my head often chirps, “How can I take advantage of an officer’s desire to participate?” Perhaps we should emulate the business world and have lunch, which unfortunately seldom seems to happen. Recently, I realized that like that elusive lunch, I can have your help if I do one thing: ASK FOR IT. I’m starting this monthly column by asking you to help me with five things. If you need to start slowly, pick one of these things and set a goal to help me with three of the five within six months.

**1<sup>st</sup>** If you are a junior officer, start preparing for promotion right now, this includes your next promotion, and your promotion to O-6. It takes a long track record of good performance and steadily growing credentials to situate officers for promotion. Take a few minutes to look at where you are now and where you’d like to be in five years and in ten years. Look beyond your current position and agency. Examine other agencies by looking at their web sites, reading bulletins and newspapers, and networking with other officers who are assigned there. Find a mentor. Then work on developing your own credentials.

If you’re a senior officer, please mentor younger officers. Guide them to perform well at work, accrue education, and engage in extracurricular activities. We have one of the best mentoring programs of any Category and you should be taking advantage of it. Use the PharmPAC website ([www.hhs.gov/pharmacy/main.html](http://www.hhs.gov/pharmacy/main.html)) to get contact information or contact CAPT Lillie Golson for information about our formal mentoring program at ([golsonl@cder.fda.gov](mailto:golsonl@cder.fda.gov)).

**2<sup>nd</sup>** Promote the Corps. Perform and behave like the officers and leaders you are. Wear your uniform and use your title so people see exemplary work and make the connection to the Corps. When you see other officers perform well, encourage their supervisors to award their activity. If you are comfortable doing this, remind your own supervisor that awarding your exemplary performance will help your career and bring credit to the Corps and your agency. (This is another good role for mentors; they can sometimes approach supervisors and suggest an appropriate award.)

**3<sup>rd</sup>** Participate in Pharmacist Professional Advisory Committee (PharmPAC) activities by volunteering to help. The Career Development, Administration, Recruitment, and Communication Sections need able volunteers. Also, consider being a member of the PharmPAC. We need a representative cadre of pharmacists on the PAC, which cannot happen without your commitment to participate. By helping either as a PharmPAC member or volunteer for one of its activities, you won’t just be giving your time, you’ll be getting additional experience, networking, and developing your own career portfolio.

4<sup>th</sup> Read and commit to the standards of conduct. Meeting me for the first time under the shadow of a potential disciplinary action is not ideal for either of us. Neither of us will be happy. Simply put, do what is right. If you feel like you need help, immediately ask for it (most officers who are headed for disciplinary action know). Every agency has an employee assistance program. And, as mentioned, our category has an excellent mentoring program. Do not suffer alone, find help.

5<sup>th</sup> Work to make the Transformation of the Corps happen. Yes, it will take work on your part as well as your fellow officers. But we can help each other. You can take the initiative by organizing the officers in your facility to meet the standards that have been established. Although much attention has been placed on the Commissioned Corps Readiness Force standards related to promotions, it is really about walking our Public Health talk. Shouldn't we be physically fit? Shouldn't we have a periodic physical as part of own health promotion agenda? Let's put these new requirements into perspective. I would like to see the Pharmacy Category be the first to reach the 100% compliance mark.

I'm looking forward to seeing this category soar. And then, we will have time for lunch.

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