

Bender
of
Twigs



LaDonna Hale

Dr. LaDonna Hale has been shaping the minds of future healthcare professionals at Wichita State University since 1998. My mom has been teaching at WSU since I was 8 years old. As a child, I used to sit in on many of her classes, coloring or doing puzzles and half listening while she taught her students about diseases and medications. I remember the sound of her students' laughter as it rang through the lecture halls and how dynamic and charismatic she was.

Dr. Hale currently serves as professor and director of assessment in the Department of Physician Associate. She teaches courses in pharmacotherapy and research and mentors students through research projects. In her 25 years at WSU, she has served in many roles in the PA department – including assistant program director, director of research and graduate coordinator, and department chair. She received her doctorate of pharmacy from the University of Kansas in 1996 and has worked as a pharmacist in hospitals and nursing homes, helping patients in the Wichita community for many years. She has an impressive bibliography of research that focuses on improving the health of older adults. And she is great at what she does! This is evidenced by the many awards she has received including the WSU Academy of Effective Teaching Award, the Kansas Board of Pharmacy Clinical Research Award, the Rodenberg Award for Excellence in Teaching, and the WSU Leadership in the Advancement of Teaching Award (to name a few).

When I reflect on my mom's career, her empathy and passion for the work stand out to me. It's no secret that pharmacology is one of the most difficult and often least favorite courses for healthcare students, but being able to prescribe medication is one of the most important skills these students will learn. My mom works hard to make her courses engaging and fun. She often tells jokes, applies theory to real-world situations, and includes amusing anecdotes while lecturing. She challenges her students to be critical thinkers, not just memorizers—to understand the *why* and *how*, not just the *what*. There have been multiple times when I have met with a healthcare practitioner in Kansas who has recognized me as my mother's daughter, and they always tell me a variation of: "Your mom was one of the toughest teachers I had, and also one of the best. She pushed us to be better and made sure we knew our stuff."

Her dedication to providing instruction at the highest quality comes from her understanding of how her work makes a difference in her community. Teaching in the health professions isn't like teaching in many other disciplines; the ability of her students to take what they've learned in her class and use it in real world practice is literally the difference between life and death. That's something that she takes very seriously and is a large part of why she's so passionate about her work. I am thrilled that my mother is being honored for her work. The university and her students are so lucky to have her!

Sierra Kelly

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Daughter of LaDonna Hale