

TRANSCRIPT

UNMC Chancellor Jeffrey P. Gold, MD: Hello, I'm Dr. Jeff Gold, and welcome to this episode of "Heart to Heart." My special guest today is Dr. Ally Dering-Anderson, who's a PharmD and a clinical associate professor of pharmacy practice and science in our UNMC College of Pharmacy. Dr. Dering-Anderson is a trusted voice nationally within her profession and throughout our community here in Nebraska. As you'll learn, and I will learn in just a few minutes, she's been honored with any number of awards on the national state and, of course, up on the campus level. And today we're going to talk with her about the importance of being aware of the drugs, the medications that we take, and how important our pharmacists are, how crucial our pharmacists are, to helping us with that and so many other things. Ally, it's great to have you with us today.

Ally Dering-Anderson, PharmD: It's good to be here. Thank you.

Dr. Gold: Well, before we talk about this important subject, our audience is always interested in: How did you make your career decisions? There are many listeners to these podcasts, and many of them are young women and young men who are in the process of making career decisions right now. And so the more we can explain how people make decisions as complex as it may be, helps these individuals greatly.

Dr. Dering-Anderson: Well, I will credit two people and you'll laugh a lot, my mother and [Avagadro](#). And you're like Avagadro's kind of old. He is, but here's...

Dr. Gold: Plus, the number is very long.

Dr. Dering-Anderson: That's the catch. I was intending to be a secondary science teacher. I wanted to teach eighth graders. I like people with no filters. I don't have many of my own. And I thought that would be great. And I did my first student teaching, and "For extra credit, please list [Avagadro's number](#)." And one of the students being a smart Alec, said, "Well, there were no phones then." And I thought it was genius, and I gave him credit, and the instructor said I couldn't do that, because the answer wasn't right.

Dr. Gold: It was something like 6.02 times 10.....

Dr. Dering-Anderson: 10 to the negative 23rd. Yeah. And I said, "But he tried."

Dr. Gold: It's striking why I remember that. It just shows you what our educational system is like.

Dr. Dering-Anderson: Yeah, he tried. He could have left it blank. He could have written... but he tried. And that's what... "Oh no, you can't do that." And I thought, but I can't teach under rules like that. I want to celebrate creativity. So, my father owned a community pharmacy in Crete, Nebraska, for decades. And every time he got called out, my mother would say, "Dad is going to save a life." And I believed her. And I thought, well, if I can't teach, maybe I can be a pharmacist.

Dr. Gold: And save a life.

Dr. Dering-Anderson: And save a life. So I went to my advisor and I said, “We need to do a little pivot here. I'm going to change from secondary education to pharmacy.” And then I got a call in 2010, “Would you like to join the faculty?” And I've come full circle. I get to teach. I get to honor creativity, and I'm a pharmacist.

Dr. Gold: And you probably don't spend a whole lot of time thinking about Avagadro.

Dr. Dering-Anderson: I don't. No. The only memories I have of Avagadro is I can recite the number, and I will never forget the young man who should have gotten extra credit.

Dr. Gold: Well, inspiring story, and I'm glad you took that road. And I guess all of us here in Nebraska and across the country owe Avagadro, at least at some level, a debt of gratitude.

Dr. Dering-Anderson: That's right. As long as you can recite the number.

Dr. Gold: Well, the theme of our discussion today really is the National Drug Takeback Day, which of course is April 27th. But in reality, every day is drug takeback day. And I'd like you to tell our audience about why this is so important and specifically, why we have a day that we call out for this important role.

Dr. Dering-Anderson: Well, the importance is getting drugs that are old, that you are not using, that somebody could hurt themselves with, out of your home safely, so that they don't end up in drinking water. And so that no one can be poisoned with them. So several years ago, the Nebraska Pharmacists Association created Nebraska Meds, which took the help of the unicameral, and the governor and the Department of Health. And together pharmacies in Nebraska accept the return -- we don't resell them, we make sure that they're destroyed correctly -- of drugs that you don't want in your home any longer. And we do that all the time. Not every state has figured that out. So, there are assigned takeback days by the DEA. That's why we still celebrate.

Dr. Gold: That would be the Drug Enforcement Agency.

Dr. Dering-Anderson: Exactly. Yeah.

Dr. Gold: I mean, you and I live in the three-letter and four-letter acronyms world.

Dr. Dering-Anderson: Yes. The Drug Enforcement Agency, the folks who worry about drugs that get into the wrong hands or for the wrong reasons. And we celebrate those days to remind people if it's old, if you're not taking it anymore, get it out of your home, so no one can get hurt.

Dr. Gold: Well, it's a really powerful message. So, let's just, I recall not too long ago reading about a young child that got into a grandparent's medicine cabinet and unfortunately found a bottle of some

sedative medication, ended up semi-conscious or unconscious, and the local EMTs were actually able to resuscitate her, and she did great. This was out in western Nebraska, I believe, if I recall the story correctly. But as I understand it, and you probably know a whole lot more than I do, that's not an uncommon event these days.

Dr. Dering-Anderson: It's not uncommon. And it should be. I mean, since 1970, we have put child resistant packaging on things.

Dr. Gold: It's also adult resistant, but...

Dr. Dering-Anderson: It is. And everyone with a small child and sore fingers knows that small children can often open those faster than adults. So we do less-than-great things. We put easy open lids on them, and then forget that the children can get to them. No blame. No blame in the circumstance for this child, who was curious and tried something. But the issue is, and your pharmacist will tell you, store it out of the reach of children. If you can open the child-resistant lid, put that lid on, so that perhaps you can slow down the curious child. You may never be able to stop them, but at least you'll be able to get to them before their curiosity becomes a crisis.

Dr. Gold: And probably even better to get medications that they're no longer taking out of the house.

Dr. Dering-Anderson: Out of the house. I agree.

Dr. Gold: So, that gets us to a bigger question, and a very important question, is the role of pharmacists in our communities. We talk a lot about people using their primary care system for advice, but as we all know, and I'm sure you know better than most, that advice from pharmacists about medication interactions and dosing and any number of other things that can be particularly helpful to increasing the benefit of taking medications and taking them more wisely, is invaluable. You look at our multispecialty teams that work in the cancer center or in the heart center or in other areas of our own institution, there's always a pharmacist on those teams. But if you're sitting at home listening to this podcast, what advice would you give our folks about they can best interact with their pharmacists to not only pick up the prescriptions as they need them, but more importantly, to get that critical information?

Dr. Dering-Anderson: Well, the first thing I will say is thank you. Pharmacists are the absolute drug experts. That's what we do. And I think embedding pharmacists in all of the medical teams is a great idea. But now you are the patient, you have received a prescription, you're at the pharmacy counter. If you are in Nebraska by law, somebody has to say to you, "Do you have a question for the pharmacist?" If you don't, that's fine. But if you do, please ask. I have a technician staff that could run the pharmacy. They can all count by five. They type beautiful labels. They answer the phone. They're really important to me. The reason that I, the pharmacist, am there is to answer those questions. So, don't ever be afraid that you are interrupting my day. You're the reason for my day. And if you're going to buy something over the counter, it's fine to come back to the pharmacy and say, "Is this okay? These are other things that I am taking. How many of these should I take? When should I take this with food without food? Will it make me tired?" And the same thing is true, even if you're doing things that perhaps we don't think of as medical, right? If you have a glass of wine every night at dinner -- ask me, "Is that okay with the prescriptions that I'm taking?"

Dr. Gold: Only if it's good wine. Right?

Dr. Dering-Anderson: Well, see, I have no basis for judgment. That's not one of my things. Now, you can ask me about a good dark beer, and we'll have a different discussion. Or even if you are perhaps going to a neighboring state where other products may be legal, ask about those. I'm not the police. I'm just here to keep you safe, and you can ask me anything. And it's important that you know that pharmacists are great resources.

Dr. Gold: Yes. One other point, and I think it's really a critical one, is that many instances, some of the major users, let's just say of prescription medication are parents and grandparents. And they may not be quite so willing to ask questions, but it's perfectly appropriate for the kiddos and the grandkids, if they're accompanying their parents and grandparents or they're picking up the prescriptions for their parents or grandparents, to ask those questions. And those are sometimes the most important questions.

Dr. Dering-Anderson: Absolutely. And it's also fine. You are sitting at the kitchen table with mom. You're having a cup of coffee. She says she has a question. Pick up the phone and call the pharmacy right then. You're right there with mom. It's not scary. You're not worried about the lady in the Hallmark cards overhearing your conversation. All of those things are great, and pharmacists love that.

Dr. Gold: Well, your enthusiasm is absolutely contagious. I'm deeply, deeply grateful for everything that you do. And let's just remember that April 27th is just one day of the year, but every day is the right day to take non-used prescription medications back to the pharmacy.

Dr. Dering-Anderson: Absolutely. Thank you, sir.

Dr. Gold: And thank you for being with us today.