



Perspective / Opinion

Physicians as Influential Leaders – Negotiation Skills

By Jonathan Ives

Approaching the office door, you begin to drown in the familiar cacophony of emotions: pallid palms slick with sweat, cast-iron lungs stifling your breath, the furious cadence of your heartbeat pounding against your sternum. Entering, you manage a smile and a hello but, beneath the veneer, your panic has wrung the carefully curated arguments from your mind like a dishrag.

Inside, sitting across from your boss, your supervisor, or your team leader, you lament over your preparation. Articles, videos, and seminars, brimming with information that seemed so poignant only days before, have devolved into a mental slurry of aphorisms and buzzwords. You articulate your terms as best you can, but it's not nearly convincing enough. Ultimately, your proposal is rejected, and you meekly return to work.

While symptoms may vary, most of us feel some magnitude of that same fear and trepidation during high-stakes negotiations. From the PhD student vying for time on their thesis, to the new practitioner counteroffering for a higher salary, the art of negotiation is an all-permeating force. Research indicates that despite vast knowledge of the topic itself, the true struggle for most is in the actual, practical deployment of these strategies, in the workplace and beyond.

In the spirit of student engagement and empowerment, the Student Leadership Committee at the MCW Kern Institute endeavored to bridge this gap. By nurturing critical skills early in career development, through the teaching of certain core competencies and providing ways to actively practice, students may more successfully navigate their professional environments.

Students already benefit from the trove of didactic knowledge during their traditional medical curriculum. The addition of self-paced, multifarious modules serves as the spice to the broth, and supplements with abilities and strategies that may accompany the student through graduation and residency. These skills are not content to merely enhance life within the hospital, however, and will even assist students at home and in their communities. The echoes of these beneficial curricula can be felt at every level of the medical and academic strata. Junior faculty benefit from greater confidence and satisfaction. Senior leaders benefit from

engagement with more proactive peers. Institutions benefit from the retention of higher-quality members who may better represent them in the future.

In the tumult of our ceaselessly changing medical landscape, the application of these skills is more crucial now than ever before. Students entering the medical pantheon must be more prepared, as a person and a physician, to better cope with these challenges.

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