



Guest Director's Column

Leadership Development: An Ever- Growing Process

By Kelli Cole & Jeff Fritz, PhD

Imagine you are a medical student with an idea on how to improve the student experience and you have a passion for better understanding leadership and its application with the practice of medicine. What would be your next steps in attempting to turn this idea into a reality? In the case of Kelli Cole and Gopika Senthilkumar, it involved applying to and receiving funding from the Kern Institute's TI² initiative. During that process their idea was enhanced by the principles of human-centered design, and fortunately for me (Jeff Fritz), I was given the opportunity to assist in their efforts. During our time together we have been joined by a team of like-minded students to explore which aspects of leadership studies would authentically meet the needs of medical students. In the articles that follow you will explore aspects of leadership and professional development that members of this team are passionate about as they share their suggestions on how this material be incorporated into leadership learning modules. Our hope is that these efforts could serve as discussion points to explore avenues to incorporate these concepts into doctoring threads within the current curriculum redesign process. Additionally, as these pieces represent works "in progress" we value your feedback and encourage those interested to connect with us as we further develop how to incorporate the practice of leadership within medicine.

We want to take a moment to share our perspectives on leadership and its role in developing caring physicians of solid character. From our perspective, leadership, as a characteristic, is not something that is a static achievable goal, but is rather something that you grow and alter as you broaden your experiences and learning. It is something that you build and strengthen, much like you would a muscle. This view of evolving and maintaining our leadership muscle skills requires the involvement of leadership training as a regular part of our routine to keep our skills sharpened and develop new ones as situations require. Just like we train ourselves to maintain our medical knowledge through courses and exams, we should also regularly participate in activities that shape our leadership development and perspective.

Leadership, in addition to the dynamic nature discussed above, also involves **influence**. Physicians inherently influence change, be it in patient care settings, as key members of the healthcare team, or in situations aimed at improving individual and societal health and

wellbeing. Specifically, physician leadership should involve aspects of personal care, patient care, and a professional perspective to influence societal good. As such, current and future physicians need to develop strong leadership skills to be effective in influencing that change at the level of an individual patient, a care team, or systemically within the healthcare system. Whichever level a particular individual may choose to participate in, they will need the qualities of a leader to be the most influential and successful in their endeavors.

Leadership also involves **stewardship**. We view leadership as not a position to attain but a resolve to serve those we interact with in manners which promote trust, health, and overall individual, team, and society wellbeing. Leadership has a multifaceted objective of reaching goals and project completion, while also promoting flourishing and the development of each member of the team. As such, leadership requires skills in **self-assessment**, **self-regulation**, and **emotional intelligence** as we develop teams focused on caring for self and others and reach for the objective of becoming physicians ultimately providing healthcare.

The Kern Institute Student Leadership Committee is committed to helping medical students develop their leadership characteristics and has been exploring means to more explicitly highlight and include leadership training into the medical education curriculum as a way to ensure students have proper workouts to strengthen their leadership muscle skills. To do so, we have monthly meetings that consist of problem-solving, interactive discussions on topics that are intertwined with leadership, professional development, character, and caring, such as wellness, active listening, feedback/goal setting, motivation, and values. We discuss which techniques or skills seem most beneficial, and brainstorm ways to incorporate what we are learning into our daily lives and when they might be best timed with the student experience. Additionally, a subgroup of the committee, consisting mostly of students, has been working on developing content for modules that together shape a robust leadership curricular track.

Many of these voices will be sharing their perspective in other articles in this issue. We believe our exploration into a leadership-focused educational track for our medical school curriculum will assist students to be better prepared for future involvement in initiating and influencing change as they see fit to an ever-changing medical practice environment.

Interested in learning more or joining in on these conversations? Join us for our next Kern Student Leadership Committee meeting on February 17, 2022, from 5:00 – 6:00 p.m. We will be discussing leadership content.



Qualtrics Survey: https://mcwisc.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_e8KDvUjI2qgDVK6

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