



Perspective/Opinion

Valentine's Day: So much more than Hallmark!

By Wendy Peltier, MD

In this guest Director's Corner, Dr. Peltier shares the process of curating this special issue with our student editorial team, and the robust response to the call for sharing stories of Love in the time of Medicine.....

From the first moments of our student editor team's initial brainstorming about the *Transformational Times* 2023 Valentine's Issue, I knew it would be one not to miss. While there is nothing wrong with romance, as we shared reflections on the holiday and what we hoped to capture in the issue, it was clear we would be digging deeper than Hallmark cards, teddy bears and candy hearts. What is 'Love in the time of Medicine'? How is it different? What does it take to begin and/or sustain a relationship during medical school? Or through the rigors of medical training? We also noted how Valentine's Day brings an opportunity to pause and celebrate love in all your relationships, not just with a partner, but also with family, friends, colleagues. Our goals were ambitious. We wanted to explore the real history of Saint Valentine, and how this tradition began. We wanted to hear from our fellow students and faculty. We dove in together. Hence, we share what has since become a two-issue series and has far exceeded our expectations!

First, we explore this ancient tradition with a most fascinating history.....

In preparation for the issue, I tried to do some preliminary research on the history of Valentine's Day, inspired by Dr. Kerschner's deep dives into Halloween and other special holidays in his *Monday Morning Coffee with the Dean* series. It turns out, this was harder than I thought. Fortunately, Julia came to my rescue, having grown up in Catholic school, and knowing much more about Saint Valentine than I ever learned. She takes us on a journey back in time, which brings a deeper meaning to the holiday and its faith traditions.

Next, we consider the importance of love and connection beyond romance.....

For me, as I reflect on love and Valentine's Day, my thoughts go immediately to my parents, who recently celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary with a holiday family reunion. The event seemed a bit surreal to us all, that big number, and also the gift of being together in-person, as the long days of the pandemic kept us fairly separated. In addition to playing games, poring over old scrapbooks, eating way too much, and sharing stories, my brother asked my folks to share advice for us and their grandchildren on what is most important in sustaining a

happy marriage. A number of very funny and candid things were shared, but one nugget stuck out to me – *‘Be truly honest with each other, celebrate and support your different interests.’* Being a homebody who married an adventurer, this really resonated with me. And it certainly rings true as I reflect on my parents through the years – my Dad supporting my Mom’s wish to be a working mother when this was very uncommon; him taking time from busy work and family life for sailing and long-distance running; my Mom starting water color painting classes after her retirement from teaching, which led to her second career as an artist.

For our ‘Part 1’ issue, in response to Linda’s call for submissions, we saw a number of interesting themes emerge in the stories submitted by our student readers who reflected upon ‘Love in the time of Medicine.’ The vulnerability of the authors was quite remarkable. We see first-hand, not only the challenges that come to relationships during the rigors of medical education, but also the deep connection and empowerment that grows within relationships through supporting each other in the pursuit of a career in Medicine. Themes of courage, perseverance, and being true to oneself shine through many of these snapshots into strong relationships. Sharing stories of love and successful relationships facing challenges is important in our medical community, although often second fiddle to stories of career building and keys to academic success. The candor and vulnerability of our authors in sharing their stories is truly inspiring.

Our ‘Part 2’ issue will include results of a Valentine’s Poll, exploring reflections on what character traits our readers value most in their partners. We will hear more stories from couples who met in medical school, Eileen will explore the importance of sharing ‘love’ letters broadly with those for whom you care deeply, and Emelyn will help us understand some of the challenges in the NRMP Couples’ Match. Chase LaRue and Emmy Lambert will bring us up to date in the ongoing success of his program, ‘You Matter, Here’s Why,’ as a time-efficient way to uplift colleagues and friends.

Finally, our Valentine’s Day challenge to you.....

As an editorial team, we hope that in taking a pause to read these issues, and perhaps suppressing any cynicism about Hallmark, you can reflect upon love in your connection with friends, partners, family and colleagues.....and yourself..... in a way that brings a deeper sense of meaning and gratitude. As Eileen and Chase have shared, take the time to write a letter, or send an email, or pop a sticky note to a colleague that celebrates what they mean to you, and why they matter.

I would like to congratulate, and extend my gratitude to our student team who curated these issues:



Julia Bosco- Class of 2024 MKE

Linda Nwumeh- Class of 2025 MKE

Eileen Peterson- Class of 2023 MKE

Emelyn Zaworski- Class of 2024 CW

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