

“By far the most dangerous foe we have to fight is apathy – indifference from whatever cause, not from a lack of knowledge, but from carelessness, from absorption in other pursuits, from a contempt bred of self-satisfaction”

- Sir William Osler

Hi Everyone

This will be a vastly different kind of weekly Departmental Acknowledgement. Be prepared to be challenged. Be prepared to reflect.

Those being acknowledged are two members of our pediatrics resident staff. They are being acknowledged for stepping up, listening to their moral compass and doing the right thing. Unfortunately circumstances do not enable me to identify them by name.

First permit me a digression into Anthropology 101. All groups, societies and organizations have unique cultures that arise organically and dynamically over time. Culture reflects a combination of norms of behaviour and the assumption of shared values. Our Department and hospital is no exception. We have a culture. A unique and very special one.

Typically culture is not codified. However sometimes it is written down. We have done so through our Mission/Vision/Values statement adopted in 2012. Now midway through my mandate I consider this the collective achievement I am most proud of that we have accomplished on my watch. I will also credit Harley Eisman and Mitch Shiller for nudging me incessantly to do this. It really is the first step of leadership.

Why am I so proud of this? I am proud because it crystallizes and clarifies our values and provides a concrete mechanism by which we can evaluate our actions so that all our actions and choices as individuals and as an organization align with our values. After all, values without actions can be reduced to mere empty wishes and empty words on paper.

If unfamiliar with this statement take the time to click on the link below and read it as posted on our Departmental website.

<https://www.mcgill.ca/peds/mission>

It's clear from a reading of our statement that we attach enormous value to providing the highest quality of comprehensive and complex clinical care to ill infants, children and youth. We also attach enormous value to educating the next generation of child health professionals in a way that puts their needs as learners first. We do these noble objectives in a context of a sustained and unwavering commitment to excellence, collegiality and accountability where patient safety is an utmost priority.

Now permit a second digression into medical education. Once one moves out of the classroom and into the clinical setting it is essentially an apprenticeship. One in which in return for labour, the trainee receives an on the job education. This takes place within the setting of a graded increase in responsibility but always with proper back-up and supervision by attending staff. The potential "dark side" of this deal is that an unavoidable power imbalance exists. The learner and teacher are both locked into a defined hierarchy of uneven power. This uneven power distribution can at times be palpably felt and can also be intimidating for the learner.

Our two anonymous residents found themselves separately in two different incidents recently where objectively concerns exist regarding both patient safety and inadequate supervision by an attending physician. Rather than being silent and "sucking it up" they chose to make use of available channels that have been established within the Department and come forward to disclose these events. A preliminary

review does indeed reveal possible concerns sufficient to merit my flagging these events both at a hospital and Faculty level. It is now a matter of due process for the individuals involved, hence the need for anonymity for our acknowledged residents.

It does not give me any pleasure to have to act on what I came to know. However I must align what we do with what we value. I can't simply do the talk, but I must do the walk.

However doing the walk is not my task alone. These residents by coming forward also did the walk. Clearly they get it. What perturbs me about this is that they both voiced considerable concerns about coming forward. Despite being 'right' they felt fear.

Through this Acknowledgement I want to communicate to them and to our entire Departmental community that there is no Departmental compromise on our core and essential values. Not while I am Chair. We are here for our patients and their families. We are here for our learners. If not, we might as well fold up the tent and go home.

There is no right to work here. It truly is a privilege to be part of this community. But to do so, you need to accept its culture. It's bigger than any of us. If you do, you will feel every day that you are part of something far greater and nobler than yourself. If you don't, you will struggle everyday like a fish out of water.

It's a choice we all need to reflect on.

Happy Valentine's Day! Be sure to spend it with someone you love.

Michael