The Corner Chair

“Canaries in the Coal Mine”

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, before the advent of portable toxic gas detectors, coal miners would bring caged canaries with them into the mine each. As long as the canaries, who are extraordinarily sensitive to carbon monoxide and methane gas, were singing on their perches, the atmosphere in the miner was purportedly safe. The phrase, “canaries in the coal mine”, has come to represent individuals (or groups on individuals) who function as bellwethers of environmental toxicity. In the Health Sciences Center, our medical students unwittingly serve that role relative to the unprofessional behaviors they encounter.

We know from recent surveys that our clinical faculty and house-staff are frustrated with the workplace. The causes are many – inefficient clinic and OR operations, inability to discharge patients that stress our already overstuffed inpatient units and emergency department, an electronic medical record that devours clinician time and attention, and a sense that their ability to deliver high-quality, safe and timely patient care is hindered, rather than helped, by the environment in which they work. All this in a time of budgetary stress, where we are pushing our clinicians to be more productive (and thus generate more clinical revenue for the institution). Can we be surprised that the result has been an apparent increase in “unprofessional behaviors” reported by our students?

While by no means excusing unprofessional behavior, acknowledging the external factors that contribute to the behavioral toxicity of our environment is a first step in fixing this problem. Residents, fellows and clinical faculty are the backbone of our clinical education system. What can be done to make them feel more appreciated, respected and acknowledged in our institution? How can we give them the time and support to become the excellent clinical educators and role models most aspire to be?

The UNM Mission: Excellence project (with the support of the Studer Group) is an important start. My special thanks to Dr. Bob Avery, whose vision and personal commitment were instrumental in bringing this program to UNM. Recognition and thanks for a job well done are always appreciated. Creating wellness programs, as we are presently embarking upon in our Surgery Residency Program, thanks to the leadership of Alissa Greenbaum, will undoubtedly improve moral.

Recreating clinical support systems with the goal of making the day-to-day jobs of our clinicians easier and more time-efficient will,
in my mind, make a huge difference. Our Surgical Directions engagement, now led by Dr. Marco Ricci as Chair of the Surgical Services Operations Committee, should move us forward, at least for our operating rooms and surgical clinics, and the “dyad” management structure for clinical services that we are embarking upon through Mission: Excellence (to better align hospital and medical staff clinical leadership) should reinforce those gains and extend them to other areas of our clinical operations. Finally, an inpatient clinical addition is hopefully on the horizon for 2020. Modern, spacious facilities inevitably improve clinician, as well as patient satisfaction.

However, even in the current adverse clinical environment, we each bear a personal responsibility to ourselves and to our co-workers, including our students, to be professional role models. Rather than railing against the inadequacies of our clinical environment or questioning the values of the millennial generation (the routine critique of younger generations by their elders has been documented since ancient Greece) WE must lead by positive example in our personal interactions each day. We do not control what happens to us, but we certainly control how we respond, especially to adversity. We may not WANT to be role models, but we are, and we need to embrace that responsibility. Our colleagues, our co-workers, and most especially our trainees and students, are depending on us.

-Dr. R

**Maintenance of Certification**

Are you current with all the Maintenance of Certification (MOC) requirements of your specialty board? What is the expiration date of your current certificate? Do you know the datelines of the MOC cycles for your particular Board? Are you on track to comply with all MOC requirements for the current cycle you are in?

Through the process of Maintenance of Certification, diplomates demonstrate to the public and their colleagues a commitment to maintain the standards of the profession, participation in lifelong education, possessing medical knowledge relevant to their specialty, and improving practice performance. The Maintenance of Certification Programs has now been in place for a decade for most of the surgical boards. As a practicing surgeon of a particular specialty, you are expected to be very familiar with the process of MOC for your Specialty Board, and are expected to stay current with all its requirements. I recommend that you log-in into your Board website periodically to verify.

The American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) has established general standards for MOC that all Specialty Boards must meet. Each independent board is responsible for developing its own MOC requirements within the ABMS framework. The components of the ABMS MOC process include:

I. Professionalism and professional standing
II. Lifelong learning and self-assessment
III. Assessment of knowledge, judgement and skills (Cognitive Exam)
IV. Improvement in medical practice.
MOC requirements in each of these domains are organized in periodic reporting cycles running from Jan 1 to December 31. Not all Boards follow the same reporting intervals. For instance, it is a 2 year cycle for Urology, 3 years for Surgery, and 5 years for Thoracic Surgery. Furthermore, the requirements of each cycle are not always the same, i.e., Urology requirements for Year 2 are not the same than those of Year 4. It is paramount that you be very well informed about all requirements and datelines.

At the end of each reporting cycle, diplomats are required to submit information through the Board Website regarding how they are meeting MOC requirements in each of the components. Please note that this information must be submitted by March 1st of the following year (two months after the end of the cycle). Failure to comply with this dateline will mandate that you follow a cumbersome reinstatement process. This will expose you to financial penalties in the form of reactivation fees and/or penalties. I can assure that the experience of normalizing your MOC status is not fun, and the fees are not small.

Please save all documentation supporting your CME claims. While documentation is not required at the time of on-line submission at the end of each cycle, proof of CME activities will be requested at the time of application for the MOC examination.

Speaking of the Board examination, please make sure that you familiarize well ahead of time with examination application requirements. All boards require a surgical case list which may take time to compile. Since most of the Boards have very strict date lines for the examination application, I recommend that you do not leave this task for the last year, when your certificate expires.

Needless to say, diplomats must be in full compliance with the MOC process at the time of application.

Failure to renew your certificate before its expiration date will expose you to a more complicated process than just not meeting the MOC reporting cycle dateline. Please don’t hesitate to get in touch with me if I can be of assistance—Jorge A. Wernly, MD
Surgical Oncology (left to right) - Dr. John Russell (Dept. Chair); Dr. Ashwani Rajput (Chief, Oncology); Dr. Victor Phuoc

Ivana Ameigeiras; Dr. Arup Das; (Chief, Ophthalmology); Dr. Joaquin Tosi

Mrs. Heidi Olson; Dr. Garth Olson; Dr. Michael Spafford (Chief, ENT)

Mr. and Mrs. John Russell

2016 SRIA Grant Awards

SRIA Grant Award Recipients (left to right) - Dr. Guanghua Wan; Dr. Duncan Meiklejohn; Dr. Rohini McKee; Dr. Liat Shama; Dr. Garth Olson; Dr. John Russell (Dept. Chair); Dr. Arup Das; Dr. Thomas Howdieshell (unable to attend)
**Adult Critical Care**

Dr. Jon Marinaro was chosen (with Michelle Harkins of IM) as Chief of Adult Critical Care at UNM Health Systems. Joining together adult medical and surgical critical care will streamline care, improve communication and educational initiatives, and promote a collaborative staffing model.

This will provide a multidisciplinary collaborative in critical care and education in all aspects of modern critical care to ensure that physicians, advanced practice providers, nurses, respiratory therapists, physical therapists, and dieticians, to work together to care for some of New Mexico’s sickest patients. **Congrats!**

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**Division of General Surgery**

The Department of Surgery at the University of New Mexico is pleased to introduce Dr. Heidi J. Miller as an Assistant Professor in the Division of General Surgery. Dr. Miller recently completed a Minimally Invasive Surgery and Endoscopy Fellowship with a focus in abdominal wall reconstruction at University Hospitals, Case Medical Center. She completed her Surgical Residency at Einstein Healthcare in Philadelphia, after graduating from Medical School at the University of Colorado. Dr. Miller has lived and worked on four continents and is excited to be setting up practice at SRMC.

Dr. Miller is active in the American College of Surgeons, Americas Hernia Society, and SAGES. **Welcome aboard!**

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**Division of Cardiothoracic Surgery**

Congratulations to Dr. Mohammed Hassan, graduating on October 8, 2016, as the Valedictorian of the Class of 2016 Executive M.B.A. Program of the UNM Anderson School of Management!

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The Department of Surgery at the University of New Mexico is pleased to introduce **Dr. Patricia Souchon** as an Assistant Professor
in the Division of General Surgery. Dr. Souchon is a Trauma and Critical Care Surgeon and prior to her arrival, she completed her Surgical Residency and Surgical Critical Care/Acute Care Surgery Fellowship in Las Vegas, with the University of Nevada, School of Medicine. She earned her Doctor of Medicine at the Universidad Central de Venezuela, Escuela “Luis Razetti” in Caracas, Venezuela.

Dr. Souchon is active in the American College of Surgeons, the Society of Critical Care Medicine, and Eastern Association for the Surgery of Trauma. Welcome aboard!

Division of Ophthalmology

The Department of Surgery at the University of New Mexico is pleased to introduce Dr. Joaquin Tosi as an Assistant Professor in the Division of Ophthalmology. Dr. Tosi is a trained vitreoretinal surgeon who first completed his Ophthalmology Residency and Retina Fellowship at the University of Buenos Aires, Argentina. He then moved to New York, where he completed a Research Fellowship in Retinal Degenerations and Electrophysiology at Columbia University under Dr. Stephen Tsang’s mentorship. After establishing in the US, Dr. Tosi then completed his VitreoRetinal Surgery Fellowship training at Kresge Eye Institute, Wayne State University, in Detroit. He recently assumed the position of Director of the Retina Service of the Ophthalmology Division at UNM, which is the only center in the whole state for such rare diseases. Dr. Tosi has a strong interest in rare inherited retinal degenerations as well as complex retinal detachments, as he was trained by Dr. Gary Abrams, one of the world experts in the surgical management of Proliferative Vitreoretinopathy. Welcome aboard!

The Department of Surgery at the University of New Mexico is pleased to introduce Dr. Nathaniel Roybal as a part-time Assistant Professor in the Division of Ophthalmology. Dr. Roybal is a Vitreoretinal Surgeon and also works at Eye Associates of New Mexico. He received his MD and PhD from the University of New Mexico. He completed his Residency in Ophthalmology and post-doctoral Fellowship in the area of Stem Cell Transplantation and Gene Therapy at the University of California in Los Angeles. He recently also completed a Vitreoretinal Fellowship at the University of Iowa. Dr. Roybal is board-certified in Ophthalmology and is a member of the American Academy of Ophthalmology. Welcome aboard!
Dr. Todd Goldblum gave a webinar for the PEDx series at Envision New Mexico on September 13, 2016 titled, "Why can't EYE read?"

Division of Surgical Oncology

The Department of Surgery at the University of New Mexico is pleased to introduce Dr. Victor Phuoc as an Assistant Professor in the Division of Surgical Oncology. Dr. Phuoc is a GI Surgical Oncologist with a focus in Hepatobiliary and Pancreatic Malignancies. He graduated from The University of St. Thomas with a double major in biology and philosophy, after which he earned a Doctor of Medicine at Texas Tech University HSC in Lubbock, TX. He completed his Residency in General Surgery at Texas Tech University HSC El Paso, followed by a Fellowship in Complex General Surgical Oncology at The University of Texas, MD Anderson Cancer Center. Dr. Phuoc is active in the Society of Surgical Oncology as well as belonging to the American College of Surgeons. Welcome aboard!

Happy Holidays!

Photos by: Judi Perea-Gutierrez

UNM School of Medicine, Department of Surgery http://surgery.unm.edu/