The pleasure of lifelong learning

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Acquire and evaluate information and learn about informatics: Knowledge in medicine is ever-expanding. This is one of the reasons for lifelong learning. We can no longer base our decisions on our own limited experiences. Biomedical research, clinical research studies and drug trials, and the results of the Human Genome Project must all be part of the things about which we need to know more. And more than just knowing the results, we also need to know how the results were obtained and interpreted. Gaining an insight into these techniques gives powerful access to this new knowledge. Much of our ability to define “clinical outcomes” and “evidence-based medicine” relates to the use of informatics, in which mathematical equations can be rapidly solved. Tapping into these informatic approaches allows one to become a better physician while satisfying curiosity.

Embrace the humanities: Arts show us humanity and the human condition, and, in a fundamental sense, medicine deals with humanity and the human condition. Thus literature, drama, and art should be components of your lifelong education, because insight into the human condition will both make you a better doctor and give you great pleasure. It may be that a traditional liberal education is the best possible preparation for medical school.

Become a teacher: Now and in the future, you will be a teacher: a teacher of patients and families, as well as of students, residents, fellows, and colleagues. The successful teacher both loves to teach and loves to learn.

Achieve the abilities of self-assessment and self-awareness: Learning requires self-assessment. In essence, and with apologies to Ralph Waldo Emerson, I contend that lifelong learning includes the learning process, self-assessment, resiliency, self-reliance, and, ultimately, happiness.

I encourage you to embrace the concept of lifelong learning and its components: Be curious, have integrity, develop your learning style, acquire and evaluate information and learn about informatics, embrace the humanities, become a teacher, and achieve the abilities of self-assessment and self-reliance. May the rewards and the pleasure of lifelong learning be with you all your days.

Reference


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