
EDITORIAL

Our time and our mistakes

All orthopaedic surgeons work exceptionally hard. It seems as if we cannot escape from working long hours every day. Even though hard work is an honour, we are often too willing to work for hours on end.

Carelessness with time management is aptly described by Chuck Gallozzi as follows: 'Why do we guard our possessions from thieves, but think nothing of the thieves that steal our time? Those thieves may be our own bad habits, which cause us to waste time.' He also says: 'Time should be a tool, not a coach.'

Our practices represent many different activities, such as consulting, recording all the details of a patient's history, clinical examinations, special examinations and conclusions. Surgery and recording the detail of every operation take up much of our time. Furthermore we have to deal with long and detailed reports resulting from claims and requests for early retirement, lectures and many other obligations.

The preparation of lectures, teaching the writing of articles, keeping up with the literature, attending meetings and many other commitments need our attention. To keep up with everything is difficult and time-consuming. It is essential for us to take time to see how we can save time!

Moreover, all of us are prone to making mistakes occasionally; and this is unavoidable. The only ones who do not make mistakes are those who have stopped operating and never try something new; those who hardly do anything. Having done difficult and complicated surgery is often followed by complications that have to be discussed with the patient's family.

Unfortunately mistakes can consume a great deal of our time – just think about having to defend your case in court. Remember that you gain wisdom from your mistakes and accelerate self-improvement as a result. If we are sincere and really feel sorry about a mistake or error of judgment that we have made, an apology to the person involved is likely to be accepted.

We cannot ignore a mistake but we can choose how to react to it. An important truth is that experience is often the result of a mistake.

A mistake or error of judgment that occurred in the past is regrettable, but to worry about the future is meaningless. It may help us if we take only 15 minutes at the end of each day to reflect on how we have spent our time, from when we left home to when we got home again.

One activity we need to reflect on regularly is the way in which we practise. Take time to think; think about the way in which you run your practice, how you treat your staff and consider how you manage your mistakes!

Do you spend time with friends? How much time do you spend with your family? Think of ways in which you can show your appreciation to your spouse or how you can surprise your children!

Do you feel uneasy with anything in your work routine? Do you compromise on your ethics or principles? Perhaps you are not the individual you want to be because you allow frustrations and disappointments to bog you down.

Do you ever feel trapped? Are you stuck in certain routines and ways of practice because of financial commitments? Don't wait for another New Year resolution or a life-threatening incident in your family before you reflect on your life.

Time is priceless and available to be used by all of us, irrespective of our titles and qualifications but we can never own it. 'The only reason for time is so that everything doesn't happen at once' - Albert Einstein.

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