Alliance of Clinician-Educators in Radiology

This newsletter serves to highlight the current ACER goals and available resources and to keep members informed of ongoing projects.

Members and potential new members are encouraged to get involved in the stimulating and worthwhile activities of ACER. One way this can be achieved is through committee membership and organizational leadership, please contact Priscilla Slanetz (pslanetz@bidmc.harvard.edu) ACER president.

Members are also invited to send their contributions to the upcoming ACER newsletters. These contributions may be sent to Matthew Heller (hellermt@upmc.edu) or Ana Lourenco (alourenco@lifespan.org).
ACER’s Mission and Goals

• Providing a formal organization and forum for clinician-educators to meet, exchange ideas, and learn new skills that promote and advance the careers of clinician-educators.

• Providing programming at the annual AUR meeting targeted towards the needs of clinician-educators.

ACER: Benefits of Membership

• Access to information and networking database for the benefit, awareness, and nurturing of clinician-educators.

• Opportunities for involvement in educational research activities relevant to clinician-educators.

Membership Update

• As of December 2017, the AUR total membership stands at 1351.

• ACER has 234 members, consisting of 183 full time members and 51 junior members.

• ACER’s membership is second to AMSER’s (287) among the AUR Affinity Groups; other Affinity Groups include RRA (107), RRA (150) and A₃CR₂ (48).
By Eric Stern, MD and Guillermo Elizondo Riojas, MD

In November 2017, AUR/ACER held our 4th joint program in Mexico with the cooperation of the Universidad National Autonoma de Mexico, in Mexico City. The theme of the program was “Education, Leadership, and Professionalism”. The meeting was attended by 205 physicians, from a variety of medical specialties, in addition to radiologists. Speakers included Eric Stern, as course co-chair, Guillermo Elizondo, Matthew Heller, Kate Klein and ACER President, Priscilla Slanetz. We are very grateful to the course co-chair, Jose Luis Ramirez Arias for his invaluable help in local organizing and leadership. We all enjoyed the warm local hospitality and more importantly, the uniformly excellent program evaluations from the attendees.

One of the goals of our AUR/ACER outreach programs, developed by the AUR International Relations committee, is to assist non-US national or regional societies in developing or improving their own similar academic radiology communities. We are delighted to report that at the conclusion of the course, there was an initiative from a group of 25 Mexican radiology educators to form an alliance, similar to ACER, in Mexico.

The new group is called ”Alianza de Educadores Nacionales para La Transformación Académica de la Radiología,” (ALENTAR, a Spanish word meaning “to encourage”). The purpose of this new alliance is to address concerns related to the teaching of radiology in diverse settings of residency programs throughout Mexico. The members of this new alliance plan to work together to harmonize radiology education within the many different teaching and learning settings throughout the country. They also plan to find innovative ways to work in partnership and share resources for the training of the next generation of Mexican radiologists.

We are all excited to see the seeds that we have planted the past 4 years take root. We look forward to supporting this new alliance in their future activities.

Attached is a photo of the ALENTAR group and their new logo!

Best wishes of the season,
Eric Stern and Guillermo Elizondo Riojas
A strong mentor-mentee relationship can help you realize and reach your potential faster than if navigating the field of academia alone. Choosing the right mentor and upholding the Mentee end of the bargain are important factors that ensure that the bond blossoms into a valuable relationship. What could you do to make the relationship thrive?

Know what you need:
Understand your goals and know how to get there. If you simply want to advance in your career and do not know how, that is okay. However, the more specific your goals, the greater value you will get out of your mentor-mentee relationship. Also determine what kind of support and guidance you need. This can range from long-term guidance on a project to one-time advice or support from a coach, sponsor or connector.

Choose wisely:
It is important to choose a mentor that you trust and respect. This could be someone you can see yourself becoming in a few years. Make sure you can relate to your mentor and that she/he can understand your needs and are up for the challenge. Remember that if you have multiple professional goals, you can have multiple mentors.

Be prepared and accommodating:
As a mentee, it is your responsibility to navigate the relationship and to know if your mentor prefers emails, phone calls or in person meetings. Prepare an agenda before each meeting and share it your mentor a week ahead of time. Come to each “meeting” with questions to clarify your needs and goals. Knowing exactly what you need will help maximize your meeting time. At the end of each meeting reaffirm what you will be done by the next meeting and set the next meeting date. Adapt meetings or calls to your mentor’s schedule.

Make it a symbiotic relationship:
Offer to help your mentor with a project or teach them a new technical skill. Send them interesting and relevant articles. Praise them to superiors at your institution, or at regional or national society meetings. Celebrate their success on social media or nominate them for an award. Recognize and appreciate their commitment to your personal and professional growth.

Build a relationship:
An important aspect to building a strong and lasting relationship is to know each other personally. Make time to meet with your mentor and just talk. Not about work, but about life - your life, their life, family, holidays, hobbies, etc.

(See References on page 8)
By Priscilla J. Slanetz MD, MPH and Anu Shenoy Bhangle MBBS, MD

It is important for educators to foster critical thinking skills in our millennial learners to enable them to provide high quality and safe patient care. Although this goal seems simple, it can be challenging to accomplish in a suboptimal environment. The learning environment – the physical space and cultural context in which residents and fellows train – directly influences the degree to which a learner masters content and integrates and applies knowledge to new situations. Creating a safe space where trainees can learn from their mistakes and freely ask questions is critical to maximize learning. As faculty, we must be cognizant about how we discuss cases, especially those with interpretative or management disagreements and those entered into peer review. Everyone (attendings, trainees, technologists, nurses, support staff) must feel valued and respected as members of the team, even if a member of the team made an error. As faculty, we must strive to instill a “love of learning” but this will only be successful in a setting that is supportive, nurturing, and respectful.

Given the pressures of declining reimbursements and increasing clinical volumes, how can we create and maintain this ideal work environment? How can we ensure that our graduates are critical thinkers? The answer is quite simple. We should follow in the footsteps of one of the former HMS Dean, Daniel Federman. Known as the “consummate clinical teacher and scholar” [1], Federman practiced clinical medicine abiding by three key principles: 1) Think out loud; 2) Stick to the basics; and 3) Be kind. By thinking out loud, he actively taught students how to think critically. He recognized that mastery of the basics was essential prior to moving on to more complex cases. And most importantly, kindness allowed him to treat everyone with respect and to show that he valued everyone on his team.

Can we apply his approach to radiology? Absolutely! As faculty, we should make every effort to share our thought process with trainees as we review cases at the workstation. We should encourage our trainees to do the same as they present cases so that we can redirect as needed. We should keep in mind the key points that every resident must know and focus on making sure that the basic skills are mastered. Finally, it is important that we practice kindness daily – maybe by saying thank you to the technologist, or by relieving your colleague so that they can get lunch after a busy morning. These small gestures of kindness promote a sense of caring, establish meaningful relationships, and create a respectful work environment allowing for the safe exchange of ideas, and consequently, foster the development of the next generation of critical thinkers.

(See References on page 8)
The topic of burnout is increasingly discussed among faculty and residents. Clinician-educators have become accustomed to ‘doing more with less’ each year; weekends, early mornings, evenings and even holidays have become fair game to finish projects, committee work, research, and teaching responsibilities. While work-life balance seems like it may sometimes be out of reach, the basis may be found in establishing and contributing to a wellness program.

The goal of a wellness program is to replace negative, unhealthy habits with positive changes that lead to work-life balance and satisfaction. Some basic components include:

**Physical factors:** Getting proper daily exercise, rest, and nutrition may seem like common sense but are easily overlooked during a busy week. Being goal-oriented with a written list with check-boxes serves a useful exercise and reminder to prioritize these basics for feeling and performing well.

**Socialization:** Relationships can erode if maintenance is not prioritized. Taking time to converse with colleagues during the workday and spending time with family/friends can be a useful way to keep perspective.

**The ability to say no:** It is acceptable to ‘say no’ to some projects and invitations. Despite unbridled enthusiasm, it is easy for the well-intentioned to become quickly overwhelmed. Developing a written estimate and plan for the effort anticipated for each commitment can help to alleviate over-commitment; making a list of required hours, personnel, and competing obligations can assist in decision-making and maintaining balance.

**Prioritization:** Living according to the adage, ‘What’s important now?’, can be applied when deciding where to focus efforts. Focusing time and energy on tasks in the order of due date is beneficial for avoiding the convergence of deadlines. While it may be tempting to work on a favorite project, this may lead to getting behind elsewhere and the eventual feeling of being overwhelmed.

**Meditation and mediation:** Taking a mental break for a few minutes daily to clear the mind and visualize happiness can lead to clarity of thought and increased efficiency. If fatigue and feelings of desperation set in, mediation by a mentor or departmental leader may ultimately be needed to off-load some responsibilities for work-life balance.

In summary, wellness is a concept that must be on the daily task list. Just like clinical excellence, teaching, research, and administration, wellness needs to be considered, planned, and executed as part of each day.
Engaging the Adult Learner  --
Flipping and Team-Based Approaches

By Priscilla J. Slanetz MD, MPH and
Anu Shenoy Bhangle MBBS, MD

Adult learners are motivated and self-directed, bring life experience and knowledge to every teaching moment, are goal-oriented and practical, are relevancy-oriented, and desire respect\(^1\). Given these learning characteristics, teachers should adjust their teaching style in order to maximize learning. For radiologists, this translates into moving away from the traditional didactic lecture and instead embracing more collaborative and problem-based sessions where peers can work together, share ideas and experiences, and learn from each other. Two well-established techniques to promote active learning entail team-based learning (TBL) and flipped learning.

TBL is a technique whereby small groups of learners work together to solve real-life problems\(^2\). It combines pre-session work with in-class individual and team readiness knowledge assessment and application of concepts to challenging scenarios. Team members have a responsibility to be prepared for every session thereby fostering an adult-learning environment. To be successful, TBL requires substantial planning and thought on the part of faculty, but done well, can be a very effective and engaging way to teach. If you are interested in learning more about TBL, you should consider attending the TBL workshop at the 2017 annual meeting of the Association of University Radiologists.

Flipped learning is another approach that engages learners and focuses on application of concepts rather than solely knowledge transfer\(^3\). A flipped classroom requires the learner to prepare prior to the session by either reviewing a power-point presentation, a short video or a brief reading and then come to the classroom for an interactive session. At least in one study undertaken at three institutions, the flipped classroom approach outperformed traditional didactic lectures with regard to overall student performance and mastery of radiologic concepts\(^4\). From a practical standpoint, flipping a classroom requires the teacher to provide learners with a pre-session assignment that allows the learner to learn basic concepts at their own pace. The teacher then prepares an interactive session where learners are actively engaged in applying these concepts to a variety of cases. The primary purpose of the teacher is to facilitate learning rather than to impart knowledge.

Both of these teaching styles embrace adult learning principles and promote the development of critical thinking in learners. Although not yet adopted at national meetings, given clear benefits in learning, it’s time for us all to consider trying one of these approaches in our teaching. And, why not give it a try? It might even be fun!

(See References on page 8)
References

References for: 5 Habits of Highly Effective Mentees (page 4)

References for: The Power of Kindness (page 5)
1. “Federman embarks on second 50 years” in Harvard Gazette May 18, 2000

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