



EDITOR'S LETTER

Investing in the Future

by David Kramer, MD FAAEM

As we head into the New Year, many of us take the time to reflect on the important aspects of our lives. Family, of course, comes up first in most of our minds. I have been thinking about the many conflicting responsibilities that all of us have. Clichés come to mind. Balance. See-saw. Compromise. Professional life vs. personal/family life. A fertile breeding ground for internal strife, no doubt. Is it a natural conflict? Is it unavoidable? How does one reconcile the conflicts inherent in trying to balance the two? These are difficult issues for hard-working professionals regardless of their chosen careers. It is certainly no less a problem for many of us in emergency medicine.

I am currently in my twentieth year as a residency program director. While I have taught residents many lessons, I have probably learned many more from them. Assuring that my priorities are "right" is something that I am still learning to do. At times it is a struggle. Sure, I practice many good techniques of time management. Of course, I have a "to do list." And, yes, I get a lot of satisfaction out of my career. But no one teaches me more about balance and priorities than my wife and children.

Maintaining balance in ones life is not easy. Career is typically constant. Family and significant others are (usually and hopefully) constant. Priorities, however, are often dynamic. Pressures abound. How do we know when to place one over the other? The answer certainly has to be more sophisticated than simply making sure that "the squeaky wheel gets the grease." Nevertheless, it sometimes does boil down to this hackneyed concept. As a program director, I know when my "busy season" is (we are in the middle of it right now). My wife claims that it is always my busy season. The answer to the dilemma is really quite simple. Always make time for family and the significant others in your lives. Sometimes quality wins over quantity, but when it comes to family, some time is always better than none. Always remember this: if one spouse isn't happy, neither spouse is happy. Sadly, many learn this the hard way. If your career is young, this is a lesson you should definitely learn. Many of us who are more senior grew up with the commercial phrase, "There's always room for Jell-O." I propose to you a modification: There's always time for family.

Happy New Year!
Dave Kramer



when minutes count

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