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Quote of the Month

“It is in the earliest days of medical school and residency that physicians’ values and attitudes toward their profession are most influenced”.
(James Todd, 1992)

Happy Holidays



Here’s wishing everyone a safe and happy holiday season! We are certainly counting our blessings and looking forward to an even better 2016 year. Hope you are, too!!

The VTCSOM/OPD/TEACH Crew

The Power of Caring (About Students)

David W. Musick, PhD

In a thought-provoking column, Dr. Maryellen Weimer wrote recently that “good teachers care about their students”....and that “the interactions students have with their teachers and the kind of relationships that teachers establish with students profoundly affect students’ learning experiences.”¹ Dr. Weimer briefly discusses two studies from the higher education literature supporting the idea that effective student learning may be highly dependent on whether the student perceives that the teacher cares about his/her well-being.

Does this type of research have relevance to medical education? A study in 2010 sought to determine what specific types of experiences or events were most impactful during undergraduate (MD) medical education.² Three weeks prior to graduation, researchers surveyed two consecutive graduating classes at a prominent medical school. Students reported that two events had very significant impacts on them: “encountering a truly exceptional role model in medicine” and “working well with a team”. This fascinating study also lists a number of other positive and negative influences on what the authors describe as “student emotional development” during medical school.

Perhaps it’s worth remembering that “people don’t care how much you know, until they know how much you care.” And, perhaps all of us can reflect a bit on how we can ensure that our learners know that we truly care about them. Can we teach someone to care? I think we can, but to again quote Dr. Weimer “the communication skills used to define relationships are complex. Caring or the lack of it is conveyed by small details intricately choreographed and part of a dance that shows what you stand for as a human being”.

I’m going to resolve to work on my “dancing” skills in 2016! How about you?

¹<http://www1.facultyfocus.com/eletter/profile/1/415.html?ET=facultyfocus:e415:1162600a:&st=e-mail>

²Murinson BB et al. Formative Experiences of Emerging Physicians: Gauging the Impact of Events That Occur During Medical School. *Academic Medicine* 2010; 85: 1331-37.