

DOP Updates, Vol 2 (3)
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Teammates and colleagues,

Welcome to the latest edition of DOP Updates, the first of calendar year 2017. Updates is an email sent to members of our extended Department of Pathology (DOP) team with the hope of sharing information and sparking conversations relevant to our common welfare. Send me an email if you have comments, concerns, suggestions or questions about the content, also attached as a PDF file ([DOPUpdatesVol2.3_20170105.pdf](#)) to preserve formatting whatever the operating system driving the device that you are using to read it.

Walking with RJ

One of the things very clear to our Patients and Families Advisory Group (PFAC) is the importance of patient stories to keep us connected to our common purpose, remembering *why* we do what we do rather than focusing only on *what* we do and *how* we do it. At our last meeting we talked about the importance of using patient stories to kick-off meetings and other shared communications. In the last edition of Updates I decided to always begin with such a story, one that I wrote in my office after walking the corridors of our own hospital. Others will come from you as you share with me your own experiences either as providers who touch patients, as patients yourselves, or as family members of those entrusted to ours (or another's) care. Our PFAC will also be exploring models for more effectively archiving the stories important to keeping us connected to purpose.

But there are other sources that come along when you might least expect them. For me it was the Moth Radio hour the Saturday immediately following the intensive training seminar that I attended with members of our PFAC in San Antonio. I was driving home listening as I often do, and when I walked through the door what I most wanted to do was find it online so that I could listen to it again. It is a story that reminds us the work we have yet to do to build a health care system that is equitable and sensitive to the needs of the vulnerable who look to us for hope. It is a story of resilience, and how the love of a mother can transform tragedy into resolve. It takes a little less than 13 minutes, and more than a couple of Kleenex, to listen. But we owe it to those for whom we care to listen and learn from their stories so that together we might transform the experiences of others, and to do that by building the mutually beneficial partnerships essential for our shared success.

Take a listen as **Stephanie Peirolo** shares her experience of walking with her son RJ as together they navigated a journey they could never have imagined possible. And how both of them were changed as a consequence. It's entitled, [Walking with RJ](#).

Givers, takers and matchers . . . and why it matters to us!

One of the things that all great organizations do well is recruit talent. **Jim Collins** in his book, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap . . . and Others Don't*, concluded that leaders of great organizations, "first got the right people on the bus (and the wrong people off the bus) and then figured out where to drive it." His startling conclusion based on a comprehensive survey of companies standing at the very top of their industries was that *who* was more important than *what* when it came to distinguishing the merely good to the truly great.

His message resonates with what I've long believe to be true: our ability to recruit effectively is one of our most important strategic competencies when it comes to realizing our dreams. So how do we – a learning organization committed to continuous improvement across all of our missions – get better at identifying the talented staff, trainees, students and faculty who can fuel our journey to being the place that others imagine when it comes to creating the future of our discipline in the brave new world of health care? And how do we do that in a way that is aligned with our common commitment to diversity, equity and inclusiveness?



I was thinking about these things and what they mean for us as we recruit to opportunities that continuously emerge in our clinical enterprise when I opened an email newsletter entitled [GRANTED](#) from [Adam Grant](#), a provocative organizational psychologist, author and speaker whose work has been featured in previous editions of Updates. In it he asks the question, *Are you a giver or a taker?*, with a link to a TED talk in which he explores this and related concepts that are highly relevant to the challenge of recruiting to a culture in which collaboration is fundamental to our collective successes. A culture in which *the rewards realized from working together* is the thing that most accounts for our Michigan Difference.

In his entertaining and informative [TED talk](#) that comes in at just under 13.5 minutes (check it out at your leisure), Adam Grant walks through the results of a very large survey in which over 30,000 respondents from across multiple different industries offered insights into the various ways in which *givers*, *takers* and *matchers* (i.e., people who try to maintain a balance between giving and taking) impact their organizations. He learned that most people (56%) self-identify themselves as right in the middle (i.e. *matchers*) between *givers* (25%) and *takers* (19%). But here's the thing, the preponderance of evidence made it very clear that while *givers* may sacrifice themselves at their own peril when it comes to individual performance and sustainability, they make their organizations better! He said it this way.

"We have a huge body of evidence -- many, many studies looking at the frequency of giving behavior that exists in a team or an organization -- and the more often people are helping and sharing their knowledge and providing mentoring, the better organizations do on every metric we can measure: higher profits, customer satisfaction, employee retention -- even lower operating expenses. So givers spend a lot of time trying to help other people and improve the team, and then, unfortunately, they suffer along the way."

In addition, while *givers* are over-represented at the bottom when it comes to individual performance they are also over-represented at the top.

"In every job, in every organization I've ever studied, the best results belong to the givers again." says Grant.

These observations beg the question of how we build organizations that not only draw givers to us but also nurture them – making it easier for more of them to excel. He described as “critical” the need to “recognize that givers are [our] most valuable people, but if [we’re] not careful, they burn out. So [we] have to protect the givers in [our] midst.”

He has several suggestions about how we might make this happen, but describes as the most important the need to, “be thoughtful about who [we] let onto [our] team.” And THERE is the connection to



recruiting! And it isn’t about recruiting for *givers*; the most effective strategies should instead be focused on avoiding the trap of unknowingly bringing *takers* into our midst. Because the potential for a single giver to positively impact a team is dwarfed by the potential for 1 taker to negatively impact a team. This may come as no surprise to those in management who have long understood that a single problematic team member who prioritizes his/her interests above all others can do a lot more damage than you might predict for an n-of-1 when it comes to a team’s

ability to function effectively!

But here’s the thing. When we recruit, often having only a few minutes or hours to get to know someone, we tend to assume that *agreeable* behaviors predict for givers, while *disagreeable* behaviors predict for takers. And it turns out *it’s not true!!* There is no relationship between the behaviors or attributes of *agreeable-disagreeable* and *giver-taker*. In other words while there are certainly *agreeable givers*, there are also *disagreeable givers*. In fact Grant suggests that *disagreeable givers* are an under-appreciated phenotype often essential for the success of highly functioning organizations, but one that we tend to avoid as “too prickly” or otherwise uncomfortable. And there are indeed *disagreeable takers*, but it is the *agreeable takers* who fool us when it comes to recruiting – there lies the trap into which we too often fall!

He ends by rephrasing what might seem familiar as the thing we point to when we talk about the Michigan Difference. Grant believes, “that the most meaningful way to succeed is to help other people succeed.” He believes that the payoff is in *the rewards realized from working together . . .* All that remains for us is to be confident in who and what we say we are.

As we get better at doing the incredibly important work of recruiting to our teams we will do it by

- embracing the diversity and sensitivities of our search committees,
- developing strategies that effectively expand the diversity of our candidate pools,
- more deeply understanding and more clearly articulating the problems that we are trying to solve,
- more consistently recognizing candidates whose skills, experiences, world views and core values are most closely aligned with the specific opportunities that we offer, and
- learning to recognize *takers* so that we might avoid the mistake of inviting them onto our bus.

Thanks for checking in on the latest edition of Updates. Send me an email if you want to expand the conversation. In the meantime, [*let's be careful out there . . .*](#)

Jeff

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