

The Editors of *Hospital Quarterly* asked Joe de Mora (and several other individuals in a leadership role) if any one book made a memorable and significant difference in their lives. This is his response.

“Back when I still believed that life’s struggles were heroic and ultimately winnable by determination and wit alone, I was influenced by one book in particular: *Magister Ludi* by Hermann Hesse. Hesse’s book written in 1943 and also published as the “Glass Bead Game,” remains my favorite and is distinguished by being the only book I ever read twice. The story is of a young man named Knecht, who developed from a student to become the master of “the glass bead game” in a mythical academic commune in the 25th century. The game itself involved a synthesis of mathematics, music, the arts and cultural values and when played by the master through the use of symbols and formulae allowed him to understand and to influence the affairs of man. Knecht’s ethical struggles on the consequences of game outcomes forms the heart of the book’s message.

“On the surface, the book is a combination of science fiction and philosophy and appealed to my interests, at the time, in these two areas. Despite having been told all through school that good books had deeper meaning, this was the first that actually did seem to have one. Knecht’s internal conflicts made me think – about life, about morality and ambition and the need to keep them in balance. I later learned, as we all must, how difficult this balance is to maintain in our own lives. In my working life, I try to remember that life is about balance and that the decisions we take affect those around us in ways not easily understood – just as Knecht’s did.

“Much in life has changed in the years since Hesse wrote this book. I was not surprised, therefore, to discover, while doing an internet search for a new copy of the book, that it has been converted into a video game. I wonder if the image of a group of 18 year olds playing the game on the computer and simultaneously in many areas of the globe would have appealed to Hesse – probably.”



Joe de Mora

“I try to remember that life is about balance and that the decisions we take affect those around us in ways not easily understood.”

**Joseph de Mora** is the President and Chief Executive Officer of Kingston General Hospital, a tertiary care teaching hospital affiliated with Queen’s University. Among many achievements, he brings to the mix: CEO roles in Sudbury, Saint John, Kitchener/Waterloo, Aga Khan University Hospital in Pakistan; and Aga Khan Hospital in Nairobi, Kenya. He established MediGlobal Healthcare Corporation in Malaysia. Joe is the elected President of the Association of Canadian Academic Healthcare Organizations (ACAHO).