

From the Editor-in-Chief

A Manifestation of Leadership

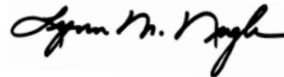
Over the years, much has been written about leaders and leadership and the characteristics and styles of each. In this issue we get our first instalment from our editor for research, Dr. Greta Cummings, who has much expertise and knowledge in this area and, I expect, will help stimulate our collective thinking about it.

When I think about the leaders I have known, respected and admired, I think of adjectives such as charismatic, inspirational, courageous, bold, tenacious, creative, thoughtful, confident, humble, fun, intelligent... what about you? Who are the leaders in our profession? What makes them leaders? When did they become leaders, and by what criteria? When you think about those whom you deem to be leaders, are these questions easy to answer? Recently, the notion of how one comes to be deemed a leader has given me pause. Is it a fair assumption that those in “leadership” positions are in fact leaders? Do position and title automatically endow individuals with leadership characteristics and the requisite aptitude that commands the respect and following of others? I would suggest that there are many individuals who secure leadership positions but fail to lead effectively or contribute to the development of future leaders. In my opinion, while they might accelerate the development of certain skills, title and position do not imbue individuals with leadership qualities.

Perhaps it is age and wisdom derived from years of experience – does surviving and enduring in this profession for at least a few years bestow the honour of being a leader as a clinician, an academic, a researcher or an administrator? Or is it credentials and more education that nets leaders? To those of you who are considered by yourself or by others to be leaders, at what point in your career did you become a leader? What were the defining features, moments and actions that propelled you to this rank? And when does one cease to be a leader – or is this accolade bestowed for life? You might ask yourself: if I were to leave my position tomorrow, either by choice or otherwise, would others still view me as a leader? I have yet to experience the misfortune of the “otherwise” but know many who have, and many of those were and continue to be first-class leaders. Those who were “leading” them perhaps had legitimate reasons for dismissing them, but in some cases might have felt threatened by the leadership exhibited by their charge.

What about those individuals who find themselves in the same role for many years, perceived to be effective, but they never do anything differently? Are they leaders, or have they just found a comfort zone that demands nothing beyond what they have always done? Are they flying below the radar of having to meet the challenge to do something differently? Not to suggest that longevity in a role is a bad thing; it just takes more effort to continue to inspire and lead with enthusiasm and energy.

Leadership is manifest in many ways, by individuals early in their careers who are willing to take a road less travelled or challenge the status quo or express a contrary opinion. While good leaders recognize the need to foster and develop emerging leaders, they also never forget that they too were once new and likely viewed as a “pain in the neck” by someone as they were finding their way. I know I surely was... probably still am. And finally, as was nicely summed up by Thomas Paine, we need to know when to “lead, follow, or get out of the way.” We need to embrace and embolden young leaders to follow their passions, allow them to push our thinking and recognize that there is always room for more than one right point of view. Our profession has derived much value and benefit from many leaders, healthy debates and new ways of thinking. Let’s be sure that our future is filled with many more.



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