Resuscitating Hope for the Failing Heart of Healthcare
Val Ulstad, MD, MPH, MPA

Objectives
- Recognize the cycle triggered by the reflex response to change
- Understand that the quality of our relationships with colleagues, staff and patients is the heart of healthcare
- Recognize symptoms of distress and burnout in self and others
- Understand the concept of paradox and choosing a constructive point of tension between two things that are true and yet competing
- Develop a more conscious relationship with time and the use of time as a representation of priorities
- Name three steps you can take to promote work-life balance for yourself

What has fueled the Healthcare Reform Fire
“Healthcare sector is far and away the most inefficient economic driver in the U.S.”
Peter Orszag, Director, OMB

- 30% of what we spend adds no clinical value (5% of GDP) - Institute of Medicine
- Nearly 4.4 million hospital admissions totaling $30.8 Billion in hospital costs could have been prevented - AHRQ
- The Gawande/McAllen Effect
- Geographic disparities are stunning!
  End of Life Care: UCLA/Hopkins $90K vs. Cleveland Clinic/Mayo $55K
  Dartmouth (Wennberg and Fisher)

Relative Consensus on Many Issues
- Reward Value NOT Volume: Value based purchasing
- Bundled Payment (End of Fee for Service)
- Accountable Care Organizations (Hospital-Physician Integration)
- Focus on Reducing Hospital Readmissions
- Transparency in Cost and Quality
- Evidence Based Care
- Waste, Fraud and Abuse
- And a Few Others

“Organizations are illusions....they are just groups of relationships.”

Change
- stressful
- fear
- sense of loss
Reflex mechanisms evolved to protect us from our biggest threat

Major threat or strain = hemorrhage due to trauma

- Activation of neurohormonal and sympathetic nervous system
- Elevated catecholamines
- Salt and water retention
- Vasoconstriction
- Maintain BP
- Restore blood volume
- Perfuse vital organs

Vicious Cycle of Heart Failure

Increased load
Decreased cardiac output
Activation of neurohormonal and sympathetic nervous system
Elevated catecholamines
Salt and water retention
Vasoconstriction

Reflexes make things worse

Vicious Cycle of Heart Failure

Increased load
Decreased cardiac output
Activation of neurohormonal and sympathetic nervous system
Elevated catecholamines
Salt and water retention
Vasoconstriction

The Heart of Healthcare is Relationship

- Emphasis on context
- Meaningful/rewarding
- Trust
- Connection
- Infinite potential
- Advocacy
- Collegiality
- Productivity
- Draining
- Suspicion
- Fragmentation
- Finite resources
- You’re on your own
- Competition

The Failing Heart of Healthcare

Strain of change
Suspicion
Anger
Withdrawal
Fear
A Patient’s Fear

• What is wrong with me?
• Am I going to die?
• Will I get the time and attention I need?
• What are my options?
• Will things be explained to me?
• Will I be in pain?
• How will I pay for what I need?
• Is my doctor my advocate?

A Patient’s Suspicion, Anger and Withdrawal

• I am on my own.
• Nobody talks to me.
• I do not trust doctors.
• I want all the tests my insurance will pay for.
• I want guarantees.
• If something goes wrong I will sue.
• I want something to make my symptoms to go away.
• The real answer is being withheld from me.

A Doctor’s Fear

• Can I keep up with the pace?
• I have given up control but still have all the responsibility.
• I will have to work harder to make less money.
• What will be well reimbursed? How can I do more of that?
• Will I have adequate staff support?
• Should I practice defensive medicine?
• What will my colleagues think of me?

More strain

• Seek information from questionable sources.
• Demand more tests.
• Psychosocial needs become “medicalized.”
• Distraction from life’s tasks.

A Doctor’s Suspicion, Anger, and Withdrawal

• I am exhausted and have nothing left for my family.
• I have no control over my life.
• I do not find my work meaningful.
• I feel like a widget.
• I made a mistake in becoming a doctor.
• I don’t know who to trust.
• Who has time or energy for committee meetings?
• Oh please, not another management theory!
• I feel unappreciated.
• I don’t care anymore.
• Do I have enough money saved to quit?

Evidence for more strain

• I want more money, time and control.
• I am angry all the time.
• I have given up on the organization.
• I will ignore my personal needs and just try to endure it.
• I quit…..or I quit and still stay in the group
Our Reflexes Thwart Us

Reflex response is exaggerated by the pace, chronicity and permanence of change.

The Failing Heart of Healthcare

Strain of change

Increased load

Suspicion

Reflexes make things worse

Fear

What will be withheld from me?

How can I protect myself?

How can I get my needs met?

New York Times, 6-17-08

“It will take real structural change in the work environment for physician satisfaction to improve. Fortunately, the data show physicians are willing to put up with a lot before giving up.”

Mark Linzer, MD

What happens when docs are unhappy?

Outcomes of dissatisfaction

Burnout


Turnover: $250,000/departing physician

Buchbinder et al. Am J Manag Care 1999; 5:1431-8

Instability (larger patient load for remaining providers)


Reduced patient: 1) access to care, 2) satisfaction, 3) medication adherence


Increased patient disenrollment


“Burnout”

A syndrome made up of three principal components:

1) emotional exhaustion
2) depersonalization
3) diminished feelings of personal accomplishment

Burnout


Physician Burnout

Several studies of practicing physicians have common findings:

46-80% mod to high levels of emotional exhaustion
22-93% mod to high levels of depersonalization
16-79% low to mod levels of personal achievement

Chopra et al
Physician Burnout

The risk of burnout increases in individuals who...

...consistently experience work overload
...have a perceived lack of control over their work environment
...have jobs that require extensive care of other people

SOUND FAMILIAR??

MEMO study (Minimizing Error Maximizing Outcome)

- Funded by AHRQ; 2002-2006
- 119 PC clinics; 420 MDs; 1785 patients.
- Determine relationships between work conditions, physician reactions (stress and burnout) and patient care (quality and errors)

MEMO Study conceptual model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workplace Characteristics</th>
<th>Physician Reactions</th>
<th>Patient Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Stress</td>
<td>Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workflow</td>
<td>Burnout</td>
<td>Quality of care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policies, processes</td>
<td>Intent to leave</td>
<td>Medical errors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patient demands</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MEMO Results: physician outcomes

- 49% said jobs were stressful
- 50% need more time for visits
- 27% burning out or burned out
- 30% moderately or more likely to leave job within 2 years
- Strong relationships between work conditions (time pressure, work control, chaos, organizational culture) and physician reactions (satisfaction, stress, burnout, intent to leave)

Autobiography in 5 Short Chapters

NO
AUTOBIOGRAPHY IN FIVE SHORT CHAPTERS

• I walk down the street.
• There is a deep hole in the sidewalk
• I fall in.
• I am lost ... I am helpless.
• It isn't my fault.
• It takes me forever to find a way out.

• I have no time.
• Other people set obstacles for me and have expectations of me.
• I am a prisoner of my life/my organization/my practice and
• Things can't be different.

• “Our standard greeting has become: I am so busy. We say this with no small degree of pride, as if our exhaustion were a trophy, our ability to withstand stress a mark of real character. The busier we are, the more important we see to ourselves, and we imagine, to others.”

We all have all the time there is.
How we spend it can be a mindful ......or a mindless choice.
But it is a choice.
We all have 24 hours in a day.

We have met THEM
and
THEY are us.
II
- I walk down the same street.
- There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
- I pretend I don't see it.
- I fall in again.
- I can't believe I am in the same place
- but, it isn't my fault.
- It still takes a long time to get out.

III
Create your reality or your reality will create you.

Create your reality or your reality will create you.

Create your reality or your reality will create you.

Are you living the life that wants to live in you?

IV
- I walk down the same street.
- There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
- I walk around it.

Stress Reduction Kit

Bang Head Here

Directions:
1. Place kit on FIRM surface.
2. Follow directions in circle of kit.
3. Repeat step 2 as necessary, or until unconscious.
4. If unconscious, cease stress reduction activity.
People who thrive in difficult times do two things: face reality and remain hopeful.

Face Reality

Corrosive Cynicism

Hold both in tension

Irrelevant Idealism

Remain Hopeful

Tensions we need to face – make tradeoffs consciously

- Work load
- Autonomy
- Control
- Productivity, Patient satisfaction, Quality, Cost
- Professional and personal life

- I walk down another street.
Deeper Understanding About what Motivates Us

- Autonomy –
  - Freedom to be creative in how to work
- Mastery
  - Giving people the chance to design and deliver care they are proud of, to perfect and improve what could be better
- Purpose
  - Having a compelling purpose

Daniel Pink – Drive: The Surprising Truth about what motivates us

Find Sanctuary Daily

- Feel physically and psychologically safe
- Reflect and capture lessons
- Regain courage and perspective
- Reaffirm a deeper sense of self and purpose
- Restore spiritual resources

- We are not helpless and improving work-life balance is really hard
- We are part of the mess and we are the solution
- Our culture seductively encourages falling in the hole in the sidewalk and WE are our culture
- Things can be different
- We all have all the time there is and we trade it for what we think is most important

- We can make conscious choices
- We can help each other face reality AND stay hopeful and see possibility
- This is about more than changing circumstances - it is really about changing our awareness.
- We can’t change our lives without changing our awareness

And changing our awareness changes our lives.
Strain of change
Fear
Suspicion
Anger
Withdrawal
Increased load
Irresistible group with which to practice medicine or to receive care

Strengthening the Heart for Change