Lessons Learned from Teaching and Practicing Medicine

C. Glenn Cobbs, MD
May 30, 2014
“Those who can do.
Those who can’t, teach.”

- GB Shaw
“Those who can’t teach, teach gym.”

- Woody Allen
YOUR FUTURE HEALTH CARE

The Challenge and the Promise Through Better Education

By

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Distinguished Professor
University of Alabama
Distinguished Physician
Veterans Administration

With Forewords By
WALTER C. ALVAREZ, M.D.
and
EDDIE ALBERT

WARREN H. GREEN, INC.
St. Louis, Missouri, U.S.A.
TRH Philosophy of Education

\[ E = hH^2 \]

\[ E = \text{Education} \]

\[ h = \text{Teacher’s Head} \]

\[ H = \text{Teacher’s Heart} \]
Or

\[ E=MC^2 \]

M = Mental Interaction

C = Cardiac Transplant
Pedagogues in Family

- Grandfather – Auburn ’94, Harvard ‘96
  - Superintendent Birmingham Public Schools (1922-1940)

- Great Aunt
  - Headmistress Chapin School NYC

- Aunt – Susan Cobbs
Each week radio personality Bob Edwards is joined by Dan Gediman, Executive Director of *This I Believe, Inc.* to discuss one of the original essays that aired during that 1950s radio series. This essay is by Susan Parker Cobbs, teacher of Latin and Greek and Dean of Women at Swarthmore College. A native of Anniston, Alabama, Cobbs studied classics at New York University and University of Chicago. Cobbs believed, as Socrates did, that the unexamined life is not worth living. In her essay from the 1950s, Cobbs says all people have goodness within them, which can be expressed where there is freedom, faith and truth.
The Human Equation

“For if my conviction holds, man is more important than anything he’s created, and our great task is to bring back again, and into a subordinate position, the monstrous superstructures of our society. I hope this way of reducing our problems to the human equation is not simply an evasion of them. I don’t believe it is. For most of us, it is the only area, in which we can work—the human area, with ourselves, with the people we touch—and through these, too, a vicarious understanding with mankind.”

–Susan Parker Cobbs, Swarthmore College
Other Influences

- Dad
- USMC
The son is rare who measures with his father, and one in a thousand is a better man.

–Homer
“General, the Chinese have us completely surrounded.”

“Good, now they can’t get away.”

– Chesty Puller, USMC
‘It isn’t even possible to see the sun because of the Persians’ arrows,’

‘How pleasant then, if we’re going to fight them in the shade.’

—Leonidas, at Thermopylae
Louis H. Wilson
“While you’re here, you’ll find many things that are wrong, that are not to your liking... not the way you would do them – and you’ll find yourselves talking about how ‘they’ ought to change this or that. And how ‘they’ just don’t understand the problem. When you have those thoughts or discussions: he went on, “I want you to remember: I am they!”
Dec. 13, 1982

To Glenn Cobb, M.D.
Best wishes to a fellow former Marine, and with deepest respect for one who has devoted his life to easing human suffering.
Semper Fidelis
Dene Sledge
The Theory of the Mind

- The ability to understand others mental state

- cf emotional intelligence, empathy
Reading Literary Fiction Improves “Mind-Reading” Skills Finds a Study from the New School for Social Research

“Theory of Mind” Fostered by Challenging, High-Quality Literature

Castano, E & Kidd, DC. Science 2013: 342 (377-380)
Some Role Models in Literature

- Euripides – The Bacchae
- Dickens – Domby & Son
- Joyce – The Dead
- Larry McMurtry – Lonesome Dove
- Chekov - “My guiding principle, hasten to do good”
The Physician

The aim of medicine is surely not to make men virtuous; it is to safeguard and rescue them from the consequences of their vices. The true physician does not preach repentance; he offers absolution.

-H.L. Mencken (1923)
“It is difficult to get the news from poems yet men die miserably every day for lack of what is found there.”

-William Carlos Williams, M.D.
Perhaps neither gain nor loss
For us, there is only the trying
The rest is not our business

- T.S. Eliot
The central place of compassion in our relationships as human beings ..... In any efforts as health care professionals reasonably coined as “good.”

- Eoin O’Brien M.D.

The Weight of Compassion & other essays. 2013.
“He must teach himself that the basest of all things is to be afraid: and, teaching himself that, forget it forever, leaving no room in his workshop for anything but the old verities and truths of the heart, the universal truths lacking which any story is ephemeral and doomed—love and honor and pity and pride and compassion and sacrifice. Until he does so, he labors under a curse.”

William Faulkner: Nobel Prize Speech
**Stockholm, Sweden**
December 10, 1950
“Careerism is Deadly”

- Robert Penn Warren
“Don’t ever turn down a job that promises less administrative responsibility.”

E.O. Wilson
Important Influences

- Physicians
  - Dr. Frommeyer
  - Dr. Harrison
  - Dr. Kirklin

- Experiences
  - Sabaticals
• Don’t do what’s best
do what’s right

Dr. Tinsley R. Harrison
Be arrogant with your superiors and humble with those under you.

−T.R.H.
“Two things in life certain”

Death

Taxes

Plus

Individuals in position of authority rarely give it up voluntarily

TRH
Two decisions that define a man (or woman)

- Who they marry
- How they die
Re William Halsted at Hopkins

“The resident staff is best trained by having full responsibility for (service) patients”
“I make no pretense of using the Halstedian system. Each patient on our services is the personal and identifiable patient of one of us, and we are personally involved in and responsible for their surgical care. Our experience is that this not only provides patients the best care, but residents the best training.”

- John W Kirklin, M.D.
Sabbatical Utility

- Disorders unique to foreign sites
- Language and cultural immersion
- Opportunity to work with exceptional investigators
- Special family experiences
My Experiences

- 6 months at teaching hospital Nairobi, Kenya + wife and son
- 6 months at International Heart School, Bergamo, Italy + wife
Generational Chasms

- Veterans
- Baby Boomers
- Generation X
- Generation Y
“Where as humanity has made continuous advances in controlling nature and can expect to make even greater ones, similar progress in the government of human affairs can not be expected.”

Sigmund Freud

1927
Teaching Philosophies

Socrates

“to evoke something unique and quite personal within his associates rather than to implant his own ideas in them... Socratic education is based on the principle that both the teacher and the student harbor knowledge as well as ignorance within themselves... The teacher can appeal to the knowledge buried with the student, striking a chord in him or her and causing a bond to be forged between them.”
Nothing that is worth knowing can be taught
Think where man’s glory
most begins and ends

And say my glory was
I had such friends

—William Butler Yeats
“The difference between mediocrity and greatness is the feeling you have for one another.”

—Vince Lombardi
Kirk Avent
Director of Education
GLENN COBBS
INFECTIOUS
DISEASE
BEST CLINICAL DEPT.
The U.A.B. Gomer Pyle Award
presented to:
~ C. Glenn Cobbs, M.V. ~
for being
the most successful ex-Marine
29 April, 1982
2013 – 2015 NATEODA OFFICER AND BOARD OF DIRECTOR NOMINEES

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Douglas F. Rhodes
Egotism is the anesthetic that deadens the pain of stupidity

--Knute Rockne
Dr. Cobbs,
Zip up your pants.
Latonya
Talis, inquiens, mihi videtur, rex, vita hominum praesens, in terris, ad conparationem eius, quod nobis incertum est, temporis, quale cum te residente ad caenam cum dicibus ac minitis tuis tempore brumali...adveniens unus passerum domum citissime pervolaverit; qui cum per unum ostium ingrediens, mox per aliud exierit...Mox de hieme regrediens, tuis oculis elabitur.

-Bede, Historia Ecclesiastic Gentis Anglorum
“Such,” he said, “O King, seems to me the present life of men on earth, in comparison with that time which to us is uncertain, as if when on a winter’s night you sit feasting with your ealdormen and thegns—a single sparrow should fly swiftly into the hall, and coming in at one door, fly out through another. Soon, from winter going back into winter, it is lost to your eyes.”

–Bede, Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum
The End
### Table 1: Tips for Good Mentoring

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-Assessment</th>
<th>Mentor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commit to mentoring</td>
<td>Offer guidance and direction regarding professional goals and issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have a clear understanding of your motivation to mentor</td>
<td>Provide timely, clear, and comprehensive feedback to questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor based on a realistic assessment of your skills and leadership abilities</td>
<td>Set goals, objectives, and timetables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognize barriers to good mentoring that often relate to time and be realistic</td>
<td>Explore, teach, and illustrate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>about your time commitment</td>
<td>Discuss professional and unprofessional behaviors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure a noncompetitive relationship</td>
<td>Discuss the importance of self-regulation as a professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Set the Principles</strong></td>
<td>Teach how to set priorities and how to politely say no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop mutual respect</td>
<td>Emphasize the importance of teamwork for a professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop good communications and problem solving strategies</td>
<td>Offer wise counsel and answer questions clearly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasize ethics and professional values</td>
<td>Offer to serve as a confidante, if appropriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be direct and honest</td>
<td>Model continuous learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commit to confidentiality</td>
<td>Build a professional network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen carefully to understand</td>
<td>Promote reflection and learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clearly communicate your expectations</td>
<td>Anticipate misunderstandings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be flexible and adaptable</td>
<td>Promote greater initiative, independence, and self-reliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be fair and just</td>
<td>Address fears, anxieties, low self-esteem, worries, and pressure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be nonjudgmental in the relationship</td>
<td>Ask questions:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicate hope and optimism</td>
<td>• What are you passionate about?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advise, don’t dictate or be autocratic</td>
<td>• What gives you the most joy?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give constructive criticism</td>
<td>• What are you good at or best at doing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celebrate success</td>
<td>Explain the criteria for advancement in the organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be reliable</td>
<td>Encourage development of skills and knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurture self-sufficiency</td>
<td>Encourage original thinking and appropriate risk taking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share yourself</td>
<td>Share stories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use common sense</td>
<td>Stimulate periodic reflection about the path and encourage continuous learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remember career development is an evolutionary process</td>
<td><strong>Table 2: Working with Your Mentee</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Acknowledge contributions of your mentee</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Help your mentee develop humility</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Help your mentee develop self-esteem</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Be aware of biases and don’t let assumptions interfere</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Encourage your mentee to take on leadership roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Observe your mentee at her professional work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2: Working with Your Mentee

| Find joy in your mentee’s improvement and successes                           | Acknowledge contributions of your mentee                              |
| Have a clear understanding of the expectations and goals of your mentee       | Help your mentee develop humility                                    |
| Encourage your mentee’s ideas and work                                       | Help your mentee develop self-esteem                                  |
| Provide constructive and useful critique of your mentee’s work              | Be aware of biases and don’t let assumptions interfere                |
| Challenge your mentee to expand and improve his abilities                    | Encourage your mentee to take on leadership roles                     |
| Respect the uniqueness and contributions of your mentee                     | Observe your mentee at her professional work                          |

### Table 3: Tips for Mentees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-Assessment</th>
<th>Learn</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have a clear understanding of your motivation to be mentored</td>
<td>Actively listen and contribute to the conversations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Select a mentor based on your short-term goals and career interests</td>
<td>Do your homework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have a clear understanding of your expectations of your mentor</td>
<td>Use other resources to look up useful information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be proactive to find mentors</td>
<td>Demonstrate the ability to set agendas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be realistic about time commitments</td>
<td>Ask what knowledge, skills, and expertise you need to develop further</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure a noncompetitive relationship</td>
<td>Discuss what you believe to be the strengths you already have</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determine your areas of need</td>
<td>Be aware when the relationship has run its course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determine the help needed to reach your potential and goals</td>
<td>Say “thank you”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decide what you hope to gain from mentoring</td>
<td>Celebrate accomplishments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Give back to the profession by mentoring others</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Set the Principles**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communicate your expectations</th>
<th>Accept criticism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Be reliable</td>
<td>Continually reassess performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be honest</td>
<td>Be respectful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow through</td>
<td>Act on your own initiative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A number of others have found that the psychological profile of students that perform best in the premedical sciences to be the reverse of what one might hope for in a physician.

Students who were most successful in the sciences “have an impersonal orientation: they are not very interested in others”

Donald B, Science as superstition: selecting medical students. The Lancet. 2010
Students

Bergamo, Villa Elios

Dr. Yezza Giamal Ben
Cardiologist
Tajura Cardiac Center
Tripoli - Libya

Dr. Pencho Kratunkov
Pediatric Cardiologist
St. Ekaterina University Hospital
Sofia - Bulgaria

Dr. Manuel Chira
Cardiac Surgeon
“Aurel Moga” Heart Institute
Clinic of Cardiovascular Surgery
Cluj-Napoca - Romania

Dr. Sandra Dalva Laimer
Pediatric Cardiologist
Passo Fundo - RS Rio Grande do Sul
Brazil

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