BOARD FORUM: REWRITING THE RULES

Last month’s board forum on “letting go” continued past press time, with the dialogue veering toward ways that core cosmetic experts are rewriting the rules and changing the way they approach the work/life balance. While government regulations and various compliance demands may force practice changes, sometimes relationships need attention.

Richard Anderson, MD: My biggest “quit” is separating from my former business partner this year. Partnerships are easier to create than quit. Toxicity is unhealthy in any relationship—personal or business—and my long-time staff that I was accustomed to and trusted, were quitting if my partner and I did not separate. My office is now a much happier work environment for my staff, patients, and me.

Julie Woodward, MD: As physicians today, we have two types of careers:
1. The type that we are paid for based on productivity.
   You perform a procedure on the patient so you are paid.
2. The work that we do that is often non-paid. We are very fortunate to have careers that we can enjoy doing work with remuneration that comes in forms other than money. These activities include attending and speaking at meetings; writing papers, textbooks/chapters; reviewing articles for publication; etc. This all takes significant time, often without financial reward, but we do it anyway! This is why we are KOLs. Even if one were to accept an honorarium from a company it would not come close to meeting the loss of income for being out of the office for a day. Rewards include prestige, sharing information, learning information to become better physicians, self-actualization, positive relationships with colleagues, etc.

   The dilemma is where to draw the line on these activities to spend more time with family. This is where being overextended is tough, and we need to learn to say, “no.”

Brooke Jackson, MD: A colleague/friend told me when he closed his practice, “At the end of the day, your patients can and will always find another doctor. Your family has you, put them first.”

I have three young children and do my best to get their performances, school plays, etc. on the calendar as iron clad and schedule around those. I also make an effort to volunteer for one classroom activity per kid per year, since every kid wants their parent to see them in their environment.

Heidi Waldorf, MD: I still remember speaking with Steve Pearlman early in my career about being grossly late with several chapters. He asked me to pull out a paper and pen, which I did. He then asked me to write in caps:

THE EXPERTS SAY

Dr. Waldorf: Perhaps it would be easier for us to make healthy decisions balancing our work and home lives as well as those related to the nitty gritty of daily practice if instead of using the words ‘quit’ or ‘quitting’ we substitute ‘limiting involvement’ or ‘opting out’ or ‘employing a new activity paradigm.’

E. Victor Ross, MD: I tell all fellows, at some point, “Just say ‘no’ to (1) drugs and (2) book chapters!”

Joe Niamtu, DMD: Most of us have CSN disease. That is “Can’t Say No.” You want something done, you ask a busy person because they know how to get things done.
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—Julie Woodward, MD

“N-O” and keep that card by my phone. It’s taken another decade to feel comfortable doing that but we all need to learn to do it more.

We also have to make an effort to understand when colleagues say “no” to our requests to lecture, join a committee, write a chapter etc. Handing out “guilt trips” should be a tool rightfully used only by grandparents.

Dr. Anderson: I have seen many changes in medicine in my years of practice. When I started, doctors were respected professionals and if you worked hard, the money would be there. Now, government and insurance companies force doctors to be businessmen if they are to stay in business.

My office has always taken any patient with oculoplastic problems and as I am close to retirement, I feel good about continuing to do so rather than limiting my practice. However, having fellows who are willing to care for the unfunded patients is a luxury for me and good training for them.