

Connections

It has been four years since my retirement, after 26 years with Northwest Permanente Medical Group (NWP). As one of the people who helped birth this publication and the Clinical Contributions Editor for the inaugural issue, I was asked to comment for this fifth anniversary issue.

My appreciation of history—personal, professional, and general—has become stronger in direct relation to my age. As I've grown older I've had an increased desire to look for the connections to the past. I'm sure it has to do with the realization there are more years behind me than in front. That fact pushes self-examination and the need to look for meaning. Increasing age adds its own perspective to the mix.

A Doctor Reading About Doctors

I'm rereading one of my favorite books, *Doctors, the Biography of Medicine*¹ by Sherwin Nuland, a surgeon and medical historian. Having a long line of professional ancestors, I feel a deep sense of connection with this type of history. Each time I read this book, I am stirred, inspired, and awed by the biographies of the individuals responsible for some of the landmark contributions in our continuing evolution as medical practitioners. These were people who, through their observations, reasoning, and devised methodologies, found new truths, which changed medical history because they had the courage to share their ideas, often radical and revolutionary, and not always welcomed.

The inspiration from reading Nuland's book comes from his describing the ability of a practitioner who can change and intermingle perspectives. It has to do with seeing one patient at a time and having to deal with the "here and now" for that specific person on the one hand, but also having the ability to put the patient into a broader context as well. It's as though we work in a forest: at times we need to concentrate on the leaves and at other times it is important to consider the limbs, the tree itself, or the forest in its entirety. It is this resonance from the one to the many to the one that gives perspective; that brings connection.

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Physician As Editor

Deciding to be a physician editor came from a passionate belief in Permanente's rich fund of knowledge and collective wisdom and the feeling that the more we can share our clinical experiences and perspective with each other, the better. It is right and good to promote institutional and individual communication.

Dr Robert McFarlane preceded me as Director of Continuing Medical Education for NWP and had started the planning for a written forum for the physicians of NWP. When I became Director in 1986, the planning continued and we started the newsletter *Permanente Practice*. This led to the establishment, several years later, of a regional journal, *The NWP Journal of Clinical Practice*, which, in turn, ultimately served as the basis for the proposal to create a national journal, *The Permanente Journal*.

Reflecting on Medicine After Retiring From Practice

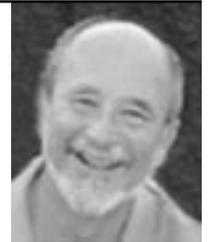
I feel fortunate for the professional life I've had, being a doctor, a director of education, an editor, and being with Permanente. I have no regrets. I would do

it again in a heartbeat. Looking back at the history of medicine, with its long, rich cast of characters and events, and looking at what we are doing now, I marvel at the still unfolding story. This medical group is part of that still unfolding story and *The Permanente Journal* embodies the effort to communicate ideas and ideals. Professionally, we share a long tradition that embraces all of the human traits, both splendid and low. To me, though,

the nobility of our professional heritage comes from the caring about others and a determined search for truth. It is in the learning about each other and how we connect to the world that matters. ❖

Reference

1. "Doctors: the Biography of Medicine," Sherwin B Nuland, New York:Vintage Books, 1989.



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