dear residents

We Will Mess Up **July 7, 2024**

Dear Residents,

The first week is done! I know that we have had several problems with onboarding, with Epic access, and with training permits to mention a few. We messed up. I hope that all is fixed now and that everyone has put these hurdles behind them. Bill Gates is credited with articulating the two rules of technology: *The first rule of any technology is that automation applied to an efficient operation will magnify the efficiency. The second is that automation applied to an inefficient operation will magnify the inefficiency.* In our case, I think the technology we used magnified our inefficient operations. These problems were widespread and affected residencies and fellowships alike. Kudos to our IM education office team and program coordinators everywhere who sorted out all the tangles.

When things go wrong, there are 5 ways to respond that are helpful and permit us to "fail well."

1. **A straight up apology** – own the error. That's far better than being caught up in a defensive-perfectionistic mindset. And owning up to error doesn't mean that we are deeply flawed. We are just human, and our processes are prone to unexpected malfunctions too.
2. **Understand the failure** – most failures are system issues and involve a complex interplay of elements. Most high performing systems have redundancy. But even these can fail – this is the Swiss cheese paradigm that you are likely familiar with.
3. **Some failures arise from emotional places** – we all have bad days and external stressors that can make us prone to failure. We are not perfect. We are all good-enough. That means that we can admit to personal vulnerabilities and emotional crises and save face. It's OK. We are all human.
4. **Learn from mistakes** – covering up error or ignoring it doesn't prevent the next one from happening. We have learned a few lessons this year. The end-date in PeopleSoft (our HR management system) is designed to expire 365 days from initial entry. So, if we onboard you in mid-June, your access expires the next mid-June. That's what happened to several residents who lost Epic access on June 18/19. We learned from this – this will not happen again. I also hope that ECFMG will have fully tested its new software. Fingers crossed; it won't go down again!
5. **Have the capacity to move on** – we have a job to do – an important one at that. Let's lean on our maturity and confidence to get back to work and, while it's important to address problems, we also need to move on and get to work.

We, in the medical profession, value high fidelity and pride ourselves in avoiding error. Following the publication of "To Err is Human" in 1999, the medical community made concerted efforts to both own up to and make efforts to prevent and mitigate medical errors. The quality movement was born. The Joint Commission (which accredits healthcare organizations) developed National Patient Safety Goals in 2003. Over the years, hospitals have developed various processes to prevent error – barcode medicine administration, the use of two patient identifiers, and several other safety measures. We operate in a highly regulated environment. But we are human.

And we will still make errors – it's unavoidable. Using a sensible approach (when the inevitable error occurs) is important for our own wellbeing and for ultimately making the workplace safer for everyone (that includes us!).

The healthcare industry is not alone – the Starbucks culture has a clever method to managing problems when these occur. The baristas use the **LATTE** method when performing service recovery. **L**isten to the customer. **A**cknowledge the problem. **T**ake action. **T**hank the customer. **E**xplain what happened.

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Wishing you a wonderful week,

Dino Kazi