

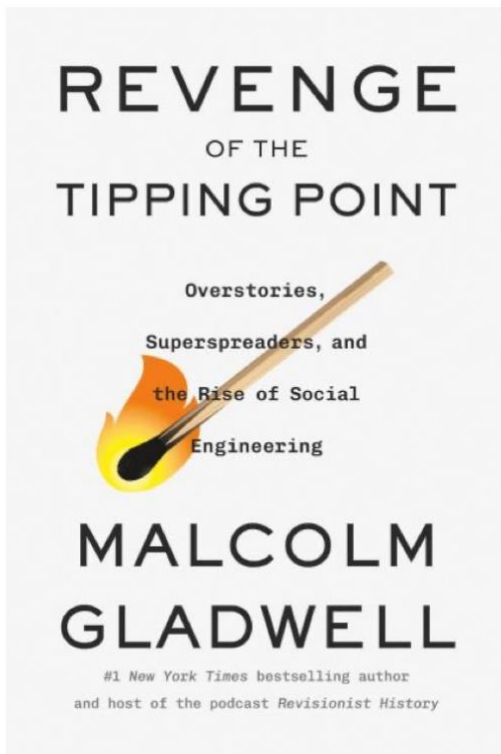
# dear residents

Revenge of the Tipping Point

October 27, 2024

**Dear Residents,**

Recruiting season has commenced! We launched interview season last Friday and we are on our way to recruiting your future colleagues. Reflecting on who you are, I find that we have an exceptionally rich and diverse group of residents at UT Southwestern. No one demographic dominates and this enables a group dynamic that sustains the success of each person in our program. This was one of ideas in Malcolm Gladwell's latest book, [The Revenge of the Tipping Point](#). Gladwell wrote the original Tipping Point 25 years ago, this new book explores the same concepts of how social epidemics spread – but this time, he covers why they are not always for the greater good. Gladwell writes about how monocultures are self-extinguishing and how “The Magic Third” appears to be a universal law, whether applied to women on corporate boards or minorities in a neighborhood. Once a critical mass is achieved, the culture is transformed and the equilibrium achieved is self-sustaining. This is exactly where we are in our residency program.



Where one finds oneself also has a remarkable influence on how we behave. Crime is facilitated in certain cities. Doctors moving from low-cost high-value practice environments to high-revenue practices quickly adopt the new paradigm – ordering more tests and performing excess procedures. I think that this has implications for residency

training. While how you practice now has an influence on how you will practice later, where you move to will have its own impact on your practice patterns. Gladwell explores superspreaders through the obvious (COVID-19 outbreak in a corporate meeting in Boston that spread all over the world in short order) and the not so obvious (how the sitcom *Will and Grace* led to a broad acceptance of gay marriage in America). In some ways that [Libby Zion](#) case was the start of our understanding on the effects of excess work hours on patient safety. The 80-hour work week limit was established. The message stuck. Many years later, the ACGME restricted interns to a 16-hour shift and then reversed itself – but the original restriction endured, and overnight call never returned for first year residents and is now disappearing for all years of training. Gladwell calls such social engineering “The Overstory.”

The book begins and ends with the opioid epidemic and an understanding of the forces that permitted it to occur and the stories of those who tried to reign it in all along. This is perhaps the most important story of all and the main reason I would recommend reading this book. We practice medicine not in a bubble but in a system with expected and unexpected effects. Regional variations in how we practice medicine tell us a story of influence – some devious and some a byproduct of other levers that exert their torque on us.

You will learn some things during your time here that I hope will endure. The magic of the Parkland Financial Assistance (PFA) program that permits the least advantaged to receive world class healthcare. The ability of Clements Hospital to manage patients with astonishing medical complexity and the unique benefits that the VA integrated healthcare model offers to Veterans. This 3-lens medical education “camera” gives you the clearest possible image of what you can see and opens the possibility of imagining what it could be. You will emerge from UT Southwestern as agents of change. This is your overstory.

Best wishes for a delightful week,

Dino Kazi