Letter to the Editor

Our True Professional Destination: Mentor

Steve Kamajian, DO, CMD, FACOFP

Dear Editor,

After reading, Nanette Miner’s article, “Ascend to Mentorship,” published in The Chief Learning Officer, through the lenses of what I have learned in my two decades of studying the Chief Learning Officer position, I wanted to share with JOFP-CA readers my vision for a reimagined osteopathic profession leadership pyramid.

This quote from the “Ascend to Mentorship” article strongly resonated in my thoughts for weeks:

“Rather than identifying the pinnacle of one’s career as a title related to managing business units or other people, I propose the highest level of one’s career should be when we ascend to advising and mentoring others.”

Leadership in any field requires skill sets that can be intuitive but, more often, are learned.

As physicians, opportunities exist for leadership with our constituencies that include patients, clinical teams, and classmates while studying either pre or post-doctoral; with management, be it office, hospital, insurance, medical-professional organizations, academic, political, publications, or with charity work.

At some point, a physician’s career journey permits growth and wisdom beyond clinical skills. Our old medical apprenticeship model involved the mantra.

See one. Do one. Teach One.

This three-part mantra mandated mentoring. Mentoring is the skill set beyond the management of people.

What if osteopathic organizations created a leadership hierarchy with a mentor at the top of the leadership pyramid and a seasoned expert to help shift through the information and offer a historical perspective in problem-solving and decision-making?

As we ascend our professional ladder, each step takes us towards an ever higher position and even greater responsibilities. Miner’s premise is that our career journey allows us to capture the talent for operational stability and change simultaneously. Once minds and hearts are engaged in any organization, a mentor can coach through whatever learning is necessary for change and inspire personal growth. A mentorship that targets unlocking the development of others, both personal and professional.

Imagine a company that has decided it is time to move senior-level people from seeing patients and, instead of retiring them, move them into a mentor advisory role. In this new role, their sole responsibility would be to consult, support, and guide the physicians and medical staff who have replaced them or the up-and-coming leaders.

Senior physicians could share a wing or a floor in the building or work from home, with private offices where they can meet confidentially with their mentees or via Zoom. Anyone from the organization can visit the “mentor floor” and request the mentor of their choice based on specialty or word-of-mouth. Instead of the brain drain facing medicine today, this leadership model fills that void with mentors at the top of the leadership pyramid. Miner puts forth the premise that mentorship is not just part of the process but, in fact, the highest goal of leadership, our true professional destination. I know my career’s true destination is mentorship.

Steve Kamajian, DO, CMD, FACOFP