Editorial

A Moment for Reflection

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No one is useless in this world who lightens the burdens of another.

–Charles Dickens

I am writing this editorial shortly after the New Year's holiday. Unlike my more junior partners and trainees (and a younger version of myself), I am finding that in my sixth decade New Year means something different to me. I typically use it as a time for reflection on the past year and a time to set goals for the upcoming year. I find this to be the perfect a period for such rumination—a fresh start, brand new eyes on the excitement for the coming year, time to turn the page, etc. Plus, it provides for me an excuse to go to bed long before the stroke of midnight—you know, so I have time to think.

In reality, one change I have noticed over the years is that my reflections and anticipation toward the New Year have taken a decidedly less individualistic tone. As a younger interventionalist, my goals largely revolved around issues centered on family, financial security, and personal and professional growth. Although the first priority has not changed, the second has lessened somewhat—and the last is almost now nonexistent on my list for 2015. I would like to consider that change a form of maturity (rather than laziness or lack of energy—do not judge), but I will note that it is a nearly palpable change. Perhaps, it is the slow transition into making positive changes in the world for one's children/grandchildren; perhaps, it is the need to feel that we are

put on this world for some purpose greater than personal growth; or perhaps, it is indeed just a natural lack of drive that comes with age (maturity, please). Regardless of the cause, I am pleased with the change.

My wife and I were out to dinner with friends a couple of weeks back. Tim and Valerie are two Emergency Medicine doctors at my current hospital, and both have been very actively involved in global health initiatives. I believe Tim is my age or perhaps a couple of years older—either way, we are at essentially the same stage professionally and personally. During the evening, conversation turned toward their volunteer efforts around the world. I could not help but wonder to myself how people like these two, who see such tragedy in their worldly travels, can keep their emotions in check and their perspective intact when they come back to the United States. How does one go from watching children die for lack of basic medical necessities to being empathic toward a middle-aged American complaining about their wait times for a knee MRI? I am convinced that I am not graced with whatever skill set these two possess—but I must admit how inspiring it is to listen to caring physicians like them.

There are many ways we can contribute to greater society. Some of us will contribute as physicians, some as parents, some as spouses or partners, and some as adult children. Various venues give us the opportunity to meaningfully contribute, whether that is through our own communities or more globally. One thing of which I am convinced is that we all have certain choices to make, and those who give back always seem the most at peace.

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