Overall, I found the content to be comprehensive, highly informative, stimulating, and perfectly relevant. Having the ‘homework’ or reading assignments available several weeks before the program was extremely helpful. I strongly recommend to future attendees to prepare for the program. It has been quite some time since I have felt so thoroughly impressed with an educational program! Where to begin?

Two days into the conference, while conversing over lunch, a colleague and I realized how fortunate we were to be learning firsthand from Stuart Altman. This man has had his hand in the proverbial pot since the 1960’s; a seeming living legend in the world of US healthcare policy. I believe his lectures covering Healthcare Economics and US Health Policy framed the week within an insightful historical context. This influenced my perspective and optimized my educational experience concerning current policy and trends. The autographed book from Stuart was an appreciated bonus!

Transitioning from history to the present day, Frank Opelka, Robert Mechanic, and Christopher Tompkins did not miss a beat! I particularly appreciated the combined approach of the nuts and bolts (ACA, MACRA, APM’s, ACO’s, bundled payment, etc.) with policy and surgeon involvement (ACS Washington office, emerging APM’s, etc.). At the end of these sessions, the message was clear: the current health policy environment is highly complex, dynamic, and primed for influence. It desperately needs surgeon involvement! Perhaps the highest yield segment during this session was Dr. Opelka’s overview of how policy is made, and his recommendations of how I as an individual surgeon can affect this process. I left this day less forlorn with impending administrative and cost squeezing doom and more motivated to do what I can to be a part of the solution!

With his sessions on Strategic Thinking, Decision Making, Hospital Physics, and Effective Leadership Styles, Jon Chilingerian brought the sessions from macro to micro. These sessions were filled with pearls of wisdom from the guru of developing physician leaders, and offered practical and specific tools that I have already began using in my current job. Lines such as “In the face of evidence to the contrary, people prefer an incorrect hypothesis rather than revise an assumption or belief….. and the primary source of so many business mistakes that prevents success is unchecked continuation of assumptions” offered invaluable insight. “Great Leadership is not about yes or no, it is about debate!” “Forecasts are always wrong when they deal with two+ variables and time.” These and many other one-liners have served to heighten my leadership awareness. I also appreciated the lessons delineating the differences between management and leadership and expounding on the deliberate process that is strategic decision making. In all, these sessions improved my confidence as a clinician leader and provided invaluable tools to draw upon as I continue to gain experience.
Financial Literacy and Conflict Negotiation rounded out a comprehensive week of classes. Brenda Anderson effectively instructed regarding the basics of income statements and balance sheets utilizing real world hospital examples. Working through these case studies illuminated a world that had previously been anything but clear to me. The final day focused on conflict negotiation, which proved to be as interesting as it was enlightening. Is there a more useful skill? The healthcare industry is complex, comprised of countless stakeholders, organizations, and institutions, each with legitimate and valued interests. The common denominator is people. Managing people and their interests therefore become paramount in leading. Jeff Prottas skillfully summarized the art of ‘principled negotiation,’ containing comprehensive advice on a process that I have already employed many times within the last 3 weeks since the week adjourned!

To me, the highlight of the week (and the precise reason I desired to come to the course) was Jon Chiligerian’s session on Leading Change within Complex Systems, which included a simulation exercise. How can I effectively build new relationships? How can I build commitment to organizational goals? How do I successfully manage conflict? How can I do all of this and still be responsible for the ‘triple performance’ standard of outcome, satisfaction, and efficiency? By leading discussions regarding attitudinal change and both social network and diffusion theories, Jon culminated his sessions and provided methods to answer all of these questions. As a relatively new physician-leader, the knowledge and resources I gained here seem invaluable. As desired, I am confident and ready to take the lessons I learned during the program to my current leadership challenges.

CONNECTIONS

One of the choice benefits of the program has to be the quality of people I was privileged to learn with. Associating with such talented and bright classmates optimized the learning environment, as I was just as likely to learn from one of them than I was from the content of the program. Representing all parts of the country, many surgical sub-specialties, and even more practice types, my colleagues also figure to influence my abilities prospectively. I made several connections with local and regional surgeons from my home state as well, which I plan on strengthening as we collectively reach out in advocacy efforts.

ACCOMODATIONS & LOGISITICS

The Babson Executive Conference Center was top notch. From the comfort and amenities of the hotel rooms, to the ease and convenient layout of the classrooms, I was thoroughly impressed. I am not exaggerating when I report that the food – breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snacks inclusive – was among the best I have had in my life. I don’t proclaim to have the most sophisticated palate, but this food was well beyond the food of fine cruise lines and nice hotels. The availability, quantity, and quality of the food left nothing to want! Transportation from the airport to the Conference Center and back was hassle free. Babson College, nestled
in scenic Wellesley, MA, offered a classic New England and inspiring environment. I was also able to squeeze in a game at the historic Fenway Park!

PEOPLE

I just wanted to thank Kate Early and Linda Purrini for their kind assistance and helpful facilitation of everything, especially considering my active duty military status. I also wanted to thank Jon Chilingerian for orchestrating a comprehensive and truly impactful program. Thank you!

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