

FROM THE EDITOR

The World Around Us

Priya Radhakrishnan, MD

As my term as *Forum* editor comes to an end, I want to thank you—the readers—who have shaped *Forum* content. I hope that *Forum* has served to voice your thoughts, describe your journey in the changing health care landscape, and above all make you feel as if you are not alone.

Health care delivery is indeed at a crossroads. The issues facing general internal medicine, particularly primary care, are the same as they were decades ago, but the context is different. Today, surrounded by health information technology (HIT) and the pressing need to ensure the health of populations, our field is struggling to adapt and respond. In the words of my esteemed colleague, Dr. Haerter, “We are undermining our field by making statements like ‘I am just an internist.’ Stand up tall. At the end of the day we do great work.”

As *Forum* editors, our team was privileged to showcase the change, controversy, and heartache that is being felt by our field—along with solutions. From HIT to Twitter to health policy and guidelines, we have tried to heighten our readers’ awareness of the conversations that are happening in our clinics, hospitals, and the virtual world. Within chaos has arisen a wealth of commentaries and thoughts that have molded the content. I am reminded of the quote from Descartes from *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*: “So blind is the curiosity by which mortals are possessed, that they often conduct their minds along unexplored routes, having no reason to hope for success, but merely being willing to risk the experiment of finding whether the truth they seek lies there.”

Our *Forum* journey has been about the people with whom we have shared ideas. Our editorial board kept its ears, eyes, and fingers

close to the action and as a result produced many wonderful articles. Our intent was to highlight the world around us and the people who were seeking the truth.

Here are a few of my favorite articles and issues from *Forum*, in no particular order.

Mental Health Theme Issue. The idea for a mental health theme issue was born out of the tragedy that occurred in Newtown, which continues to resonate across America. We felt compelled to remind readers of the problems we face delivering care to our neediest patients. This issue was particularly important to me because it included forthright commentaries by authors who had experienced behavioral health problems. My young patient who suffers from anorexia nervosa had the courage to show me that there was more to her than her disease. A second story came from a colleague who worked with me to rebuild our patient-centered medical homes to better provide behavioral health care.

Interview with Steve Schroeder on the National Commission on Physician Payment Reform. This came after I heard his speech, titled “Arc of the Moral Arc of the Universe is Long and Bends Towards Justice,” at the 2013 annual meeting. Perhaps his message came to me at just the right time in my own career, when I was undergoing challenges as a chair trying to address productivity and social justice in my role as a leader. I was living the nightmare that many institutions across the country are facing: maintaining department and division solvency and balancing the crisis in medical education funding with our need to care for the poor—all in the midst of constant change. It truly was a crisis in leadership for me. Reading the report of the National

Commission on Physician Payment on the heels of the speech gave me courage to continue the work that I had begun. Two years and a stable department later, I feel that the stars are truly aligned: The 2013 meeting and interview gave me the fairy dust that I needed.

Transitions of Care Theme Issue. This issue is one that stood out in terms of outcomes, largely due to the hard work of Michael Landry, an associate editor and now a council member. Michael’s experiences working with individuals committed to the care of young adults with special health needs made the issue shine and led to the development of a task force in SGIM led by Gregg Talente, who will no doubt do great things. As a reader, I was again struck by the willingness of caregivers to give a voice to millions of parents and caretakers of adults with chronic disease—and to open our eyes to what they face every day.

Health Policy. I want to acknowledge the Health Policy Committee (HPC), which is committed to ensuring that SGIM members understand the trials and tribulations of general internal medicine. In a world where we, the lowly internists, battle formidable political pressures, the HPC had strong messages for us. The HPC continues to be one of the most passionate groups in SGIM, and their work has given SGIM center stage on many issues of national importance. There is a health policy column in almost every issue that attempts to inform, irk, and hopefully instigate us all to take action on the major challenges facing our field.

Be Happy, Eat Sushi. Of all the columns I have written, this is my favorite. It is neither the best-written nor most profound article I have prepared for *Forum*, but I love it be-

continued on page 2

FROM THE EDITOR

continued from page 1

cause it struck a chord with so many people and proved without doubt the power of the pen. I had colleagues from different walks of life and states asking me if I was talking about them. Needless to say it did get me into hot water. One colleague stormed into my office because someone from an academic department across town asked him which phenotype he fit: Hermit Crab, Victim, Prima Donna, or Enfant Terrible. What this article proved to me was that *Forum* had arrived, that people actually read the stuff we wrote and

edited, and that we were able to do exactly what we had set out to do as an editorial board.

I would be remiss not to mention the valuable comments shared by our readers and their observations showcasing unique aspects of general internal medicine. They indeed fueled our desire to do better. We have tried to stick to our motto: to inspire, inform, and connect. Our readers have kept the conversation alive both in e-mails and on GIM Connect. More recently, toward the end of my term, we have faced con-

troversy head on. The debate about the annual physical examination started on GIM Connect, continued on *Forum*, and culminated in a powerful town hall meeting hosted at our national conference.

I am grateful for the opportunity to work with wonderful associate editors and colleagues within SGIM who have been very active in informing the readership about the world around us. I have no doubt that the next iteration of *Forum* will be better.

Tag, Karen Horowitz. You are *it!*

SGIM