

Clinical CONNECTIONS

INFORMATION ON
MEDICAL TRENDS
THAT DIRECTLY IMPACT YOU
AND YOUR PRACTICE

Emotional Intelligence: Critical for Successful Leadership and a Culture of Safety

By Erik Swenson, MD, FACS
Senior Vice President, Chief Medical Officer



Many professionals believe Emotional Intelligence (EQ) is even more important than IQ in the ability to lead and develop work environments that are functional. In a work environment where great risk exists, such as a hospital or a physician's office, having the right culture is absolutely necessary for success. EQ is so vital for success that all physicians should understand what it is as well as how they can improve their own EQ and how they – as leaders for the organization – play a vital role in coaching their colleagues and co-workers.

As I visit our hospitals throughout the country, I have the unique privilege of meeting so many outstanding physicians. We are fortunate to have such a high caliber of physicians who have chosen to practice at our hospitals and we know that it is because of your experience and dedication that our patients are receiving high quality care. At the same time, we also realize we can continue to improve our own skills and modify our communication styles to best serve the organization. One of the areas that is routinely a challenge – for physicians as well as other professionals – is the need to coach and hold our peers accountable. And the issue of EQ is perhaps one of the most sensitive areas to address.

A PERSONAL NOTE

Every year Capella asks physicians to give us their opinions on issues related to their hospital and how they think we're doing to help them take care of their patients. The most thorough way for us to include multiple medical staffs is by using a printed survey. If you have not received yours soon, you will.

The results are provided to your hospital's administrative team and as well as to leaders of your medical staff. Together we strategize about how to make things better for you and your hospital.

Your input is absolutely vital. Without input from you, our decision-making ability is compromised. I personally look at every medical staff survey and make decisions based on the information and opinions you share. For your benefit and mine, I truly would appreciate your filling out the survey. Thank you in advance for your time and effort.

EQ is the ability to recognize and understand emotions – in yourself and others – combined with the ability to use this awareness to manage behavior and relationships. As human nature dictates, the first reaction to any event is emotional. When an unpleasant or stressful event is recurring, its occurrence can cause a prolonged emotional reaction. When this happens, the event is known as a “trigger event.” I can immediately think of several “trigger events” for me. The page from the ED as I pull into my driveway at 11 p.m. Or the nurse call from the floor at 2 a.m. when I just got to sleep after a call from the same nurse at 1 a.m. My first reaction is definitely emotional, and I must work to not respond emotionally.

An excellent physician always has his or her emotions under control because everyone looks up to them in moments of crisis and tension. As you are well aware, we must always display a level head in times of stress and discomfort. Choosing to be in complete control of our emotions through recognition of “trigger points” is good practice for when things really get tough and not just annoying.

In *Emotional Intelligence 2.0*, by Bradberry and Greaves, they break down EQ into four traits.

- **Self Awareness** is the ability to see yourself as others see you. It is the ability to make an accurate assessment of your emotions in the moment and to understand your emotional tendencies that may arise from many situations. This ability allows you to become proficient in the other three components of EQ.

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PHYSICIAN ACHIEVERS

DR. DAMBA CHOSEN HEALTH POLICY FELLOW



Victoria Damba, DO, has been chosen by the American Osteopathic Association to be an Osteopathic Health Policy Fellow for the next year. She is one of only 12 physician lead-

ers chosen from around the country for this educational program sponsored by the Ohio State and NY Queens College of Osteopathic Medicine and the American Osteopathic Association. A hospitalist at Mineral Area Regional Medical Center (Farmington, MO), Dr. Damba represents the hospital's medical staff on Capella Healthcare's National Physician Leadership Group.

NATIONAL "HAND HYGIENE LEADERSHIP AWARD" PRESENTED TO DR. ZAFAR

Blal Zafar, MD, a hospitalist at River Park Hospital (McMinnville, TN), was one of six physicians in the country to receive the Lathem Physician Leadership Award in Hand Hygiene from Proventix Systems of Birmingham. The 2012 recipients are recognized as dedicated leaders of change within their facilities and provide outstanding examples of excellence in leadership and hand hygiene to patients, visitors and staff members.



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- **Self Management** is the ability to evaluate a problem and come up with a solution that works for longer than the emotions would dictate in that moment. It's about seeing the "big picture," how you fit in it and what needs to be done for the whole of the problem.
- **Social Awareness** is the ability to accurately pick up others' emotions in the moment and understand how they are being affected by the events. This is not always intuitive, as much as we might want to believe it is. And, frankly, asking people questions about how they feel will give them comfort as well as give you information that can be used to help them do their job or cope with the event that just occurred.
- **Relationship Management** is the ability to manage the group's interactions which, of course, is only effective if you've developed the other traits of a person with a high EQ.

We probably all know someone who has gotten so difficult that even friends and colleagues were loathe to point out how their behavior was negatively impacting other people.

However, in today's world of Sentinel Event reporting and Value-Based Purchasing, the direct relationship that this type of emotional reactive behavior has on increased medication errors, operative complications, more readmissions and overall poorer outcomes is now well established. No longer can organizations afford to ignore doctors with low self and social awareness, or poor self and relationship management. And we as physicians should not tolerate poor behavior from our peers and colleagues.

Physicians in leadership roles – and really, that should be all of us – need to understand that the old practice of "we protect our own" needs to be replaced with "we help our own." Help usually means at least notifying our colleagues of their poor behavior or performance and, ideally, holding them accountable for improved behavior. Doing nothing does not help either our colleagues or our patients. Understanding the importance of having a medical staff, especially the formal leadership, with high Emotional Intelligence or EQ is the beginning to building a caring environment and a true culture of safety. It will also allow physicians to help physicians during these challenging times.

KEVIN HALE, MD, RECEIVES CAPELLA HEALTHCARE'S PHYSICIAN LEADERSHIP AWARD

Dr. Kevin Hale is the recipient of Capella Healthcare's annual "Physician Leadership Award." The award was presented Capella's annual Leadership Conference in August.

Michael Wiechart, Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer for Capella Healthcare, presented the award: "Dr. Hale is an unyielding advocate for quality and patient satisfaction for all patients. The entrepreneurial skills he has demonstrated in growing his practice from one to 21 providers over the last 20 years has benefitted National Park Medical Center and its patients as he has served in numerous leadership roles. He was appointed to serve on Capella's inaugural National Physician Leadership Group, and rose to the position of chairman this year.

"Additionally, Dr. Hale's leadership in the community has been invaluable and played a significant role in the success of area youth as well as the Lake Hamilton public school district. It is one thing for someone to make a donation to help out a worthy cause, but it is quite another for a person to give so selflessly of their time. Dr. Hale spends much of his free time with area youth by coaching area sports teams. Almost daily he allows youth and their parents to use his personal sports equipment and facilities as a way to further give back to the community. He also provides services such as free physicals through his clinic to youth participating in sports. And he gives significant time to serve on the Lake Hamilton School Board.

"Dr. Hale has used the indescribably painful experience of the loss of his son Kameron to form an organization that makes a daily impact on youth throughout the Hot Springs area. Kamo's Kids Foundation actively works with community organizations, the juvenile court system and school counselors to provide a wide variety of needs to underserved children."

In honor of this award, Capella Healthcare has made a \$500 contribution to Kamo's Kids Foundation.



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