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"Excellence Is Available to All Who Are Willing...": A Manifesto for Today's Leaders in Health Care

Linda Clark-Borre
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“Excellence Is Available to All Who Are Willing...”

A Manifesto for Today's Leaders in Health Care

Linda Clark-Borre, Guest Editor

Transplantation medicine is involved with many components of health care. It relates in some fashion to the science behind virtually any type of medical research imaginable. Its practitioners interact with those of other specialty areas within their institutions as well as outside of them. They have a considerable knowledge of, and interaction with, governing bodies that shape the future of health care, including how the field is administered and funded. An ongoing discussion, that includes sharing advantageous business practices, will be important not just to secure the future of transplantation but to benefit medicine and, ultimately, society.

This issue of *Graft* highlights practices related to successful business-related outcomes in transplantation medicine. In this context, “business” includes the elements that support a successful endeavor—including principles of organization, financial planning, database design and management, creating benchmarks for customer service and satisfaction, and a few concerns that are unique to transplantation. It involves focusing on relationships among decision makers and planning for one’s survival during competitive and challenging times. A diverse group of contributors with direct involvement in the field describe the approaches they take to ensure stability during a time when economic constraints abound, resources are strained, and the future of health care is itself in question.

The process of constructing this issue seemed straightforward at first. We asked, “what are the primary business issues and how are they being addressed?” As we made initial contacts, we uncov-

ered virtual networks of competency. The generous spirit with which our experts often led us to others, whom they admired and looked to for support and insight, was reassuring and inspiring. Challenging administrative issues are being addressed daily with creative, even ingenious approaches by motivated individuals in many of our nation’s transplant centers.

In reviewing the manuscripts of those who accepted our invitation, it became clear that this issue would be something more than a collection of solvent business practices applied to a transplant framework. It is also about leadership in action. In the various viewpoints represented, our experts demonstrate a responsive attitude that acts boldly in the face of adversity, through uncharted territories, to get important work done.

The process of uncovering this expertise, much of which has yet to be discovered and shared in depth, led to another set of fundamental questions. Will frustrating health care restrictions and obstacles continue to be imposed from the outside as a consequence of seemingly random, shortsighted decisions of the “powers that be”? Or might resolute and courageous leadership emerge to develop strategies that lay claim to a brighter health care future—on terms they deem justifiable and important?

By the nature of their mission, transplant practitioners and administrators compel society to consider themes that are often cast aside during health care policy discussions. First, in the living body of countless transplanted individuals, the field illustrates the value of preserving precious human life when possible. Second, it brings to light a practical

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redemption that might yet be extracted from a tragic situation involving loss of physical life: a miracle we can all see here and now. Grief remains, but a new meaning emerges that offers a measure of comfort as grieving families—and a community of witnesses—awaken to the reassurance of the human capacity to unselfishly meet the abject need of another. Out of chaos, strangers draw unexpectedly close; out of tragedy, hope emerges. Transplant patients become advocates and teachers. Even the tens of thousands awaiting transplantation remind us that there are needs and responsibilities yet to be met—the outcomes for which we are all somehow responsible.

Our own hope is that this issue of *Graft* will encourage the field to move confidently across the ever-shifting landscape of the current health care scene, not wherever “the forces” may lead, but to the place our visionaries believe we must be.

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