

formadores necesitan volver a la práctica clínica para seguir siendo profesionales competentes. Lo que va a impresionar a nuestros estudiantes no son nuestros títulos, sino nuestra maestría clínica.

Por lo tanto, el camino es interminable. Pero en vez de temerle o ignorarlo, tenemos que sumergirnos en el viaje. Es una profesión única que nos permite crecer intelectualmente sin estancarnos.

Endless road

Un camino sin fin

John P. Lampignano

GateWay Community College in Phoenix, AZ, United States

As I continue to advance in my career as a radiologic technologist, I seem to be always catching up. I began my career as a student in 1976 at a small college in Phoenix, Arizona. I had mastered hand processing of film in the darkroom. We had some clinics that used automatic processing but several others did not yet possess that technology. Automatic exposure control (AEC) consisted of a single photo cell that was reliable some of the time. Therefore, the knowledge and use of manual exposure factors were essential. I kept a notebook of reliable exposure factors that became my best friend at the hospital.

Over the past 36 years, I have been in the constant state of learning new technology and procedures. In the small sports medicine clinic that I work, we use computerized radiography linked to a PACS in which images can be send and interpreted throughout the U.S. But of course that is outdated technology. We hope to purchase a direct digital system soon so we can eliminate the use of imaging plates. And with it, we will have to learn how to use that system safely and competently.

In our profession, the learning never ends. But we are linked to the perpetual advancement of technology and procedures. It was that love for technology that first brought us to this profession. We must learn and use current technologies that will produce a diagnostic study with least amount of risk to the patient. And that elusive goal to learn the newest and greatest technology is never reached. As soon as we get comfortable, there is a new body of knowledge that we must learn and applied in the clinical setting.

There are new contrast agents being investigated. Systems are being miniaturized such as hand held ultrasound devices that we can use in the emergency department for

a fast diagnosis. The fusion of PET with CT and MRI has radiographers and nuclear technologists learning about each others' disciplines. New professions are being created such as the radiology assistants to perform fluoroscopic and other procedures to free the radiologist to perform other responsibilities. And there are other new technologies and diagnostic techniques being considered on the horizon.

How do we cope with this constant evolution of the profession? First, never grow complacent. To believe that we have mastered the profession is a mere illusion. We must remain active in the learning process. Attend professional conferences, read professional journals, and participate on online forums. Become informed of future trends before you are forced to learn a new system that has been adopted in your clinical site.

Second, remain a life-long learner. Continuing education is more than a requirement to maintain one's certification. It is a professional commitment to remain competent in the use of the newest technologies in a manner that produces diagnostic studies with the least amount of risk to our patients. This is especially essential for my fellow educators. We cannot prepare the next generation of imaging professional unless we are knowledgeable and competent with emerging technologies. Furthermore, educators need to return to clinical practice to remain current as imaging professionals. It is our clinical mastery that will impress our students; not merely our advanced degrees.

So, the road is endless. But rather than dread or ignore it, we need to immerse ourselves into the journey. It is a unique profession that allows us to grow intellectually without becoming static.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.imadi.2012.09.001>