Editorial

What Will Be Our Legacy?

“When they turn the pages of history / When these days have passed long ago / Will they read of us with sadness / For the seeds that we let grow?”

—Rush, “A Farewell To Kings”

It seems only fitting to launch my new role at Practical Dermatology® with a quote from one of my favorite songs, and yet it conveys a sad prophecy as we look at the current state of dermatology. There is an air of concern among dermatologists that the glory days are behind us. That we have become our own worst enemies in the house of medicine. That we have become sellouts when it comes to relationships with industry. And that the great creators and “giants” of the specialty are now mythical legends; “slide readers” have replaced “thought leaders.”

Why settle for that despair? Why should we be complacent and let ourselves become sloppy and lose our creative drive? Dermatologists are the smart ones—remember? We are the ones who use one clue to postulate 10 possible diagnoses, who take the mechanism of one medication and apply it to 10 diseases, and even cure patients rather than just treat them. In that case, shouldn’t we share our thoughts, publish our visions and our observations, and let our creative juices flow so that others can learn? Why create a new generation of colleagues who are so afraid of their own shadows that patients are left hanging? Or even worse, why turn our back on the innovations of vehicles, novel therapeutics, and even the dreaded concept of “off-label” applications that our previous generation of “giants” used to create our current doctrines?

As my good friend Joe Bikowski and I say to each other: “Look at you, and look at me looking at you.” So to follow his lead, I implore my colleagues to become “teachers” and not just “healers.” There are so many of our colleagues who might be shy about standing at a podium but have a lot to teach us, so even one written page from them can make a difference. For all of us waiting for a clinical trial to change our prescribing habits: Spend time reading about our colleagues’ experiences and treatment protocols instead. Let’s publish our thoughts, our observations, and our ideas so that dermatologists down the street and across the country can learn. Let’s make Practical Dermatology® our forum for professional growth, for sharing what makes us special, and most importantly, to make us proud of ourselves. I am looking forward to seeing how we do, so that the pages of history will remember us not with sadness but with pride that we made our specialty great.

—Neal Bhatia, MD, FAAD
Co-Chief Medical Editor