Better living through chemistry

Un*ected kindness is the most powerful, least costly, and most underrated agent of human change.

Bob Kerrey

Dear Colleagues,

I was reading a great article over the weekend in “Success” magazine (one of my favorite sources for lighter reading). The gist of the article was about our biological need to be part of an altruistic organization. You can imagine why this content caught my eye. I could not pass up the opportunity to learn how the author combined organic chemistry with the psychology of altruism. What better place to apply these principles of selfless concern for the well-being of others than a hospital, and what better viewpoint than from the discipline of nursing to test these principles?

The author, Shelly Levitt, beautifully translates the biology of our innate drive to protect others, as told to her by Simon Sinek—an expert in inspirational leadership. It seems that much of the altruism we experience as health care providers is driven by four biochemicals: endorphins, dopamine, serotonin, and oxytocin. Sinek cleverly classifies the four biochemicals as either “selfish” neurochemicals or “selfless” neurochemicals. Dopamine and endorphins are considered “selfish” neurochemicals because their primary function is to preserve your well-being. Endorphins, as you know, mask physical pain with pleasure, which makes it easier for us to endure things that we might otherwise stop doing because of the unpleasant experience created by the associated pain. Dopamine is well known as the “satisfaction” neurochemical (based on stimulation of the DA2 receptor, which is different than the DA1 receptor response that influences hemodynamics).

The release of dopamine increases when we take on bigger challenges—and there seems to be a direct relationship between the release of dopamine and the degree of difficulty a challenge presents. Achieving more difficult goals, individually and as a team, is biologically rewarded by the release of this “satisfaction” hormone. In other words, the bigger the challenge, the greater the sense of chemically induced satisfaction.

Serotonin and oxytocin are considered “selfless” biochemicals. Serotonin is associated with pride and surges in us when we perceive others like us or respect us. At a basic level, it reinforces the bond we share with our parents, children, leaders, co-workers, and I would even say, our patients. Oxytocin, on the other hand, promotes empathy and trust and deepens bonds with those for whom we have mutual respect. Ultimately, oxytocin is responsible for the “warm fuzzies” we feel when we learn to trust and receive trust back.

I am sure by now you are wondering what all of this has to do with nursing—and why I would write about it in a blog. My point is this—we’ve known for some time that much of our behavior is a matter of personal chemistry. What is becoming clearer to us is that our personal chemistry is
greatly influenced by our interactions with others, as noted above. This makes me wonder what our work lives would be like if each of us committed to a single, daily random act of kindness toward a co-worker. Is it too much to believe that the warm feeling we get from doing good for others would generate more good deeds? Is it unlikely that our desire to achieve difficult goals as a team (or unit) would be enhanced if we took even greater pride in what we do every day? These are interesting things to consider. The next time you feel warm and fuzzy, or full of pride, or triumphant, relish the moment—and then pass it on.

Have a great week,

Kenneth

Nursing Administration for the Department of Nursing Services and Patient Care is pleased to share the following broadcast made on July 7, announcing that Dr. Kenneth Rempher was officially named Chief Nursing Officer, effective June 15. Congratulations!

This message is sent on behalf of Jean E. Robillard, MD, Vice President for Medical Affairs, UI Health Care; Kenneth P. Kates, Chief Executive Officer, UI Hospitals and Clinics and Associate Vice President, UI Health Care; and Debra A. Schwinn, Dean, UI Carver College of Medicine.

We are delighted to announce that Kenneth J. Rempher, PhD, RN, MBA, CENP, has accepted the offer to become the Chief Nursing Officer, UI Hospitals and Clinics, effective July 15, 2014. In this role, Dr. Rempher will be responsible for planning and directing the overall administration and provision of nursing services throughout UI Health Care. As CNO, he will build upon an exemplary, world-class professional nursing organization, and focus on further integrating the clinical programs of Nursing and Patient Care Services with other programs within UI Health Care and the university. He will continue to instill evidence-based standards of patient care, support accreditation and regulatory agency requirements, and achieve credentialing standards for the Magnet Recognition Program, among other key responsibilities.

Dr. Rempher has been serving as Interim Chief Nursing Officer since April 2014, previously serving as Associate Chief Nursing Officer and Associate Director of Hospital Services since August 2012. During his relatively short time with UI Health Care, Dr. Rempher has been a strong champion for nursing excellence and accountability, leading the development of a Nursing and Patient Care Services Quality Plan, and driving the redesign of systems to optimize nurse staffing and department financial performance.

As Associate Chief Nursing Officer, he worked in collaboration with front-line nurses and nursing leaders, as well as other hospital leaders, to generate creative strategies for improving the patient experience in the organization. He was instrumental in leading the team that achieved “Magnet” designation for UI Hospitals and Clinics for the third time. In addition to his
multiple hospital-wide projects, he has been a tireless advocate for hand hygiene, helping the hospital to achieve and sustain a success rate above 90 percent compliance.

As well as focusing on patient care quality, safety, and service, Dr. Rempher has also worked extensively with Patient Financial Services and department directors to develop operational and capital budgets, manage budget priorities, allocate resources, and resolve budget issues.

Immediately prior to joining UI Health Care, Dr. Rempher served as the Assistant Vice President of Patient Care Services at Sinai Hospital of Baltimore. He also served in a variety of leadership roles at Washington Hospital Center, Washington, D.C. Dr. Rempher has served on the National Workgroup to Revise the ANA Scope and Standards of Practice for Nurse Administrators, as an editorial board member for AACN Clinical Issues, and as a peer reviewer of manuscripts for numerous nursing publications, including the American Journal of Critical Care. In addition, Dr. Rempher served on the Board of Directors of the Maryland Organization of Nurse Executives and held a position on the Health and Science Policy Committee of the American College of Chest Physicians for three years.

He also serves as a guest lecturer for multiple, highly respected nursing programs. Dr. Rempher has been the principal investigator on numerous research projects, and is the author of several dozen presentations, published articles, and book chapters.

Please join us in congratulating Dr. Kenneth Rempher and welcoming him to his new role within UI Health Care.

**MILESTONES**

**Certifications**
- Laura Dunn, BSN, RN, CCRN, house operations manager, BHS/ISS/MSS, is now a Critical Care Registered Nurse
- Brandy LeClere, BSN, RN, CMSRN, staff nurse, CRU Team 3, is now a Certified Medical Surgical Nurse

**Education**
- Charlie Terzano-Borovic, BSN, RN, staff nurse, 6RC, completed a BSN degree at American Sentinel University, May 2014
Congratulations to the CRU Team 3 for achieving a 55 percent Staff Nurse Certification rate! Deb Bohlken, MSN, RN, OCN, nurse manager, attributes this tremendous achievement to the “No Pass, No Pay” program and her team’s commitment to life-long learning and professional growth. Way to go, Team 3!

Announcements

Nursing/Safety Grand Rounds, July 9
Topic: “Delivering Culturally Sensitive Healthcare,” presented by Lou Ann Montgomery, PhD, RN-BC (moderator) and a panel of UI Hospitals and Clinics Nursing Staff, Department of Nursing Services and Patient Care. Click here for flyer.

Thanksgiving in July Community-Wide Drive
Support the Thanksgiving in July Community-Wide Food Drive by bringing non-perishable canned or packaged food items to work this month. Drop-off bins are located near building entrances throughout the UI Health Care campus. Tax-deductible financial contributions may be dropped off in Volunteer Services, 8025 JCP (Elevator F, Level 8), or sent to: MarCom, External Relations, 4150 Westlawn. Make checks payable to (your choice): Johnson County Crisis Center Food Bank, Coralville Ecumenical Food Pantry, North Liberty Community Pantry, or CCA Community Food Pantry. For more information, contact Tom Walljasper.

Blood Drive announced
The UI DeGowin Blood Center will host a blood drive in the Fountain Lobby on Thursday, July 17, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Successful donors will receive a water bottle. Appointments are encouraged, but walk-ins are welcome. Questions? Call the blood center at 356-2058. To sign-up online, visit this website.

Fall 2014 Tuition Assistance Reimbursement Program
The online Fall 2014 semester tuition application for P&S, Merit Exempt, and Merit Confidential staff is now available through Friday, July 11, 2014. Click here to learn more.

Note from Lou Ann Montgomery: I have approved most graduate and certification applications for fall even though the deadline isn’t until July 11. Once I complete those reviews, I will start
reviewing the RN-to-BSN paper requests, which is a manual process. The tuition reimbursement approval process takes me a few weeks to complete. If you have not heard about your fall reimbursement request by July 25, please feel free to contact me. Thank you for your patience.

**Information Regarding Reimbursement**
Everyone, whether you are at the UI or an external program, receiving tuition reimbursement needs to complete [this form](#) and send in a copy of your grades and tuition receipt to Lou Ann Montgomery, T100 GH. For spring semester, this should be done as soon as possible, ideally within 30 days of receiving your grades.

**Quick Links** Click [here](#) to learn more about:

- Ethics Consult Service available
- Staff Art Show applications
- A Partner-in-Care allows patients to let others help with their care

When commenting, please be respectful of your colleagues.

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