Translating Knowledge Into Action

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This month’s issue, guest edited by Garry M. Vickar, MD, FRCPC, DLFAPA, reviews the value of psychoeducation for patients with chronic psychiatric disorders and their families.

As I read these articles, I thought about the vagaries of the process of translating new information into practice. First, there is the focus of the message. For instance, in a solo practice, it would be more difficult to add a psychoeducational component to treatment, as helpful as that might be, than it would be if working in an institution.

On the other hand, a group practice could operationalize the benefits of psychoeducation for their entire patient base if they could figure out a way to obtain funding for the program. So we need not only information about how to set up such programs, but also how to set them up in specific clinical situations, and how to fund them. We might find that they are feasible, and that they might help a lot of people, but determining how to get from Point A to Point B so that we actually help patients and their families is the real issue.

We need to be satisfied that the innovation can really add value, then we have to figure out how to develop and support the treatment innovation in our practice environment.

It is the same with all new information. For example, I have become convinced that mindfulness will enhance my experience of life.

Maybe, I might be able to live more per unit of time by being mindful more of the time.

The packets of seeds that I distributed around my yard to attract song birds seem to have done the trick; now I hear magnificent displays of beautiful bird calls. I ask myself, how do I multitask, writing this editorial, while being mindful enough to really appreciate the beautiful symphony of glorious bird calls?

I make the assumption that multi-tasking (or utilizing working memory) is antithetical to being mindful. To me it is being successful at the business of living versus time to just be there and really live. To have a meaningful life, it seems I have to be able to do both. How does one learn to navigate this delicate balance?

The bird songs are exhilarating; yet, it is also important to express my thoughts about our life as psychiatrists. That too can be exhilarating. How do I balance the two – if they are, as I assume, two functions in opposition?

It’s a good problem to have, this being able to balance constant learning with meaning and mindful appreciation of my consciousness on all levels. How do I allocate my precious consciousness to live the most, the deepest, the most meaningful life possible?

While I am alive and conscious – I don’t want to waste a second – it’s all gravy – that could run out at any instant. Translation is challenging and exciting!

doi: 10.3928/00485713-20120606-01

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