



AOA REPORTS AND MAJOR UPDATES

Leadership... What does it really mean?

Peter D'Alessandro

On a sunny Sydney November weekend, I was privileged to be one of 15 surgeons from around Australia invited to participate in AOA's Young Leaders Forum. Consistent with the 2017 AOA theme of 'Transforming Leadership', and led by Ian Incoll, Adrian Cosenza and Lawrie Malisano, the Forum was designed to facilitate the development of 'surgical and organisational leaders of the future.' It provided a unique opportunity to discuss, collaborate and ultimately challenge ourselves to progress on a pathway of 'leadership.' But what does that really mean?

The Forum provided an insight into the many facets of effective leadership, both subtle and overt. We explored the nascent AOA Mentoring Program led by Tim Musgrove; the refreshing approach to health care administration of Matt Hanrahan; and Nicole Williams's ability to transcend barriers in our profession. We also reflected on the power of successful political advocacy through ophthalmologist Catherine Green, which confronted our own orthopaedic successes and failures in this realm. Finally, keynote speaker Ronni Kahn inspired us with her passion and energy, which she has channelled into a remarkable global movement to eradicate food waste.

As agents for progress, innovation and change, we surgeons can become cynical and disheartened, burdened by the frustrations of a seemingly inefficient health system, overbearing bureaucracy, and clinical interference. It is easy to narrow our attention and energies on what we are trained to do well – diagnose, treat and ultimately focus on individual patient care. In reality, however, we have an opportunity (or is it a responsibility?) to make a broader contribution. We can't hide from the



fact that as medical practitioners and surgeons we have a unique position in society – we are granted a level of trust and faith that makes us leaders and role models in our communities – whether we formally choose that path or not.

The AOA Young Leaders Forum challenged participants to progress to the next level of leadership. Do we have the will and desire to wield our influence both inside and outside the sphere of the day-to-day workplace? Will we 'stick to our knitting', as advocated by some prominent members of the community, or do we have the courage to leverage the moral and political capital that society bestows upon us to become champions in addressing the wider social and political challenges of our time? In Australia, these challenges have historically been overcome, placing our nation at the forefront of progressive societies. However, in more recent times, there is no doubt that even in our own backyard, progress, advancement and true leadership has been challenged as part of a global wave of declining liberalism driven by insularity, derision and fear.

As AOA members, we all have a seat at the leadership table. The real question is whether we are willing to exert our influence and take responsibility as true leaders in the broader community. [AOA](#)



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Leadership Forum

John Roe



Good leadership means different things to different people. It does not take a singular form. There are often many factors at play, so what others may perceive as constituting good leadership can be very much dependant on the situation, the people involved, and the 'objective facts' of the matter at hand.

Orthopaedic surgeons routinely use leadership skills in managing the care of the patient in the team environment that is the operating room. This type of leadership paradigm is analogous to what is seen in sporting teams and is well developed by the end of training. There is a common goal and each participant has a defined role.

Nevertheless, in the modern public and private hospital systems there is an increasing requirement for orthopaedic surgeons to demonstrate leadership skills that will improve outcomes for patients, not just on an individual basis, but at a systems level. This type of leadership involves dealing with the broader issues, including less direct outcome measures and interacting with people within a bureaucracy that has never experienced individual patient care. There are often vastly different agendas and measures of success. Traditionally, orthopaedic surgical training has not been structured

to foster substantial skill development in this domain.

With this in mind, the AOA Young Leaders Forum was held in Sydney in November 2017, bringing together senior trainees, Fellows and early-career consultants to address these concepts by engaging with colleagues from orthopaedics, other specialties and the wider health system. The goal was to improve the understanding of leadership with a view to developing techniques that could be utilised not only for self development, but also to exert a positive influence more widely in health systems management, whether it be at a departmental, hospital, state or federal level.

Orthopaedics is evolving and is now coming to terms with the issues around generational change, workplace dynamics, and the lack of diversity in training. At the Forum we were able to appraise the example of how some of these very issues have been dealt with by our ophthalmology colleagues, and how motivated leaders willing to identify deficiencies can be effective in facilitating change.

When things are going well, leadership is easy, but when adversity and challenges arise, that is when confronting the challenge and making the required change exposes the true leaders. If we are not the leaders, we will be led, and that may not result in the desired outcome. [AOA](#)

OPPOSITE PAGE

TOP (L to R): Adrian Cosenza, Tim Musgrove, Catherine Green, Nicole Williams, Matt Hanrahan and Ian Incoll during the 'Panel Discussion'

MIDDLE AND BOTTOM: Participants work together in the helium stick challenge to draw conclusions on verbal vs non-verbal communication through balancing the stick

THIS PAGE

LEFT: Immediate Past NSW Branch Director Tim Musgrove discusses 'Mentoring'

MIDDLE: RANZCO Dean of Education Catherine Green discusses 'Advocacy and Influence'

BOTTOM: AOA COE Adrian Cosenza puts forward a hypothetical on ethics and professionalism

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