DR. CRYSTAL WRIGHT (HOST):

Welcome to Central Line. I'm Dr. Crystal Wright, guest host for this five-part podcast series featuring anesthesiologists who contributed to the Monitor's special issue, out now, *Mentoring, Coaching, and Negotiation: Connecting with Purpose*. Today I'm talking to my co-authors Dr. Louis Tollinche and Dr. Lisa Solomon about our Monitor article, *Authentic Mentorship Includes Navigating Cultures*. So, I welcome my co-authors to the show, Drs. Solomon and Tollinche.

Dr. Tollinche, I'm going to start with you. What exactly is cross-cultural mentoring?

DR. LOUIS TOLLINCHE:

So, Dr. Wright, that's a great question, really. First and foremost, everybody has the ability to serve as a cross-cultural mentor, provided they have the eagerness and they can dedicate a requisite time to succeeding. We have to start with a framework that builds on a common understanding of what cross-cultural mentoring is. So really, Dr. Wright, anybody that's you know, motivated to have a mentor mentee relationship whose backgrounds or identities are different from their own, they're charged with using evidence-based approach to support mentorship. They have to be adept at navigating cultural boundaries, including gender, racial, socioeconomic, geographic and even personal.

And I think the best, sort of most comprehensive definition of cross-cultural mentoring is provided by the National Academy of Sciences. And, and I'll read this. This is a quote provided by NAS, and that is that mentorship is a professional working alliance in which individuals work together over time to support the personal and professional growth, development and success of the relational partners through the provision of career and psychosocial support. So really, Dr. Wright, this is an extraordinary opportunity for both
the mentor and the mentee to derive mutual enrichment and an intentional relationship with someone who doesn't look like you, necessarily think like you, be it culturally, race, sexuality or even gender identity. The focus, then, is squarely on our values and our virtues. Cross-cultural mentoring has been an important part of my professional growth. As a Puerto Rican gay man, the pool of mentors that fit my unique identity have necessarily been quite limited. It's been through extraordinary experiences, both as a mentor and a mentee in a cross-cultural capacity that have underscored the value and mutual reciprocity of these relationships.

DR. WRIGHT:

So why is that important and who does this benefit? I believe you've had a good experience as a mentee, Dr. Solomon. Can you talk about why this matters?

DR. LISA SOLOMON:

Yeah, I do appreciate thank you for having both myself and Dr. Tollinche in this discussion. I think Dr. Tollinche had really emphasized the importance of this being mutual, enriching or beneficial to both the mentor and the mentee. They essentially get a personal professional growth. This is especially important over the next five years. We now see that we're transitioning to a multigenerational workforce. And these relationships really help anesthesiologists bridge the various generational gaps and bring a lot of innovation to our specialty. So I think that's what's key, is that we as a specialty are able to develop and strengthen our physicians professionally and ultimately help be able to take care of a diverse patient population.

So, Dr. Wright, you asked about my personal experiences as a mentee. And I think what's was very helpful is that these relationships were important, especially transitioning during early career and entering in my first position outside of fellowship. I think this is especially important to connect with individuals of diverse backgrounds. My particular mentors were also culturally diverse for myself, and I felt that added a lot of value and insight, especially in areas of advocacy and practice management that wasn't traditionally taught in residency.

In addition to that, it also opened up the opportunity to have me connect with the ASA's Committee on Professional Diversity and be able to have networking opportunities, gain additional experience also in how to develop within our profession these mentor mentee relationships that can help us towards the future with new graduates and, and new residents that are coming on board.

DR. WRIGHT:
What kind of road map exists for cross-cultural mentor mentee relationships? There are some challenges here, so I'm hoping you can shed light on the barriers, Dr. Solomon.

DR. SOLOMON:

Yeah, absolutely. I think there are three areas in particular I'm focusing on that we still have an opportunity to evaluate how effective programs are. We do know that there are a fair amount of residency programs that report that there are formal mentorship programs that are being offered. But with respect to evaluating the effectiveness of these relationships or these pairings, that's something that we still need to explore and obtain some tangible data.

The other area is really having a pool of diverse mentors and being able to try to have representation of mentors in all aspects within leadership, from professional positions in a C suite up to various clinical settings is really key. This is important because the availability of diverse mentors is what allows us to develop these trusting relationships, the ability to have dialogue that's candid, to address issues that are important, and conversations that impact the ability for the mentee to have successful interactions with their mentor.

In addition to that, also, we know that there is opportunity definitely to have cross culturally competent mentors. This is something that takes time in which both the mentor also, as well as a mentee, have an understanding about how various nuances such as like, race, gender or culture really impacts relationships and, and how we can help foster relationships that have us connect with common visions and overall values, for both of the mentor and the mentee to have a successful pairing,

DR. WRIGHT:

The idea of trust is, is certainly really important. It truly takes a mentor that has the emotional intelligence to sort of step out of their own space and step into the space of the mentee in order to allow the lines of communication to be open, particularly when covering topics that may be uncomfortable.

Let's talk about best practices. What are the keys to successful cross-cultural mentoring?

DR. TOLLINCHE:

So, Doctor, and I think this is a fantastic question, really centers on, on the goals and hopefully some messaging that we can communicate. The first is that mentors should center their efforts on a binary viewpoint in which the mentee is not only a solitary
person, maybe an individual, but also part of a larger social backdrop. It's incumbent on mentors to employ inclusive approaches, things such as cultural responsiveness, active listening and really stepping away from this idea of colorblindness. Instead, we must mindfully recognize that culture based dynamics can influence mentoring relationships.

So mentors and mentees, we have to acknowledge the influence of our identities on ambitions, including the potential for what's known as imposter syndrome and how that can affect the mentorship relationship. We should consider their mentees individual lived experiences. We have to use things such as active listening, honesty, certainly a nonjudgmental attitude, but especially persistence, patience and really at the core, an appreciation for diversity.

Mentorship must be awarded and recognized by the institution. Leadership should support initiatives that validate, honor and develop the power of diversity. And as such, leadership must incent and in turn reward and visibly recognize mentors for inclusive mentorship in the same way or the same vein, that effective teaching is recognized so that recruitment, retention, tenure, promotion and even performance appraisals of faculty should include all forms of formal and informal mentorship.

So, Dr. Wright, we know that sensitive issues at times will arise and the mentor must be cognizant of these and negotiate appropriate ethical boundaries with their mentee. Mentors must create boundaries and really resist this idea of becoming friends with, with their mentees. Nevertheless, it mentors must assume different roles as, as the relationship evolves for the mentor and the mentee.

And really at the core, we should focus on the word encouragement. Encourage instead of giving prescriptive advice, that's what should inform the take home message of all of our interactions, mentors should avoid becoming overly invested in the mentees choices, or they may be disappointed in a mentee’s decision and thereby damage the relationship.

**DR. WRIGHT:**
Finally, for a bit of myth busting, the question I'm asking all our guests this month, what's a common misconception about leadership among anesthesiologists, and why are they wrong?

**DR. TOLLINCHE:**

Dr. Wright, I, I like this. It's sort of a curveball and a great question. And as I think about the answer, it really jumps out that probably the, the biggest pitfall is that once a leader is named, leaders automatically assume that they have to have all the answers. And, and the right answer is probably that the leader doesn't always have an answer. The
best leaders know that they have resources and how to draw from them. It's a mistake and a feature, I think, of a feckless leader who steers away from an egalitarian approach to answering difficult questions. Leaders must be decisive and of course, clinically competent. But a good leader knows that the best answers are derived from collaboration.

**DR. SOLOMON:**

Yeah, I think I'd like to add from my perception is that I, I think tenure is perhaps the most common misconception in terms of being able to be a leader. Leadership is about influencing outcomes and motivating others. And I agree with Dr. Tollinche about developing a collaborative role for a positive outcome. And I, I think this is something that can be done without necessarily tenure. But we do see innovation and new ideas approached with individuals from various levels of experience. And so that's where, I think in terms of looking at leadership, I like to encourage more of having the opportunity, leadership can occur without necessarily tenure, is what I'd like to add.

Thank you for joining me today. I enjoyed collaborating on this article with both Dr. Tollinche and Dr. Solomon. Please visit asamonitor.org to read the article I co-authored with Drs. Solomon and Tollinche as well as other Monitor articles on Mentoring, Coaching, and Negotiation: Connecting with Purpose that we'll feature in this month’s episodes of Central Line. Join us again soon.

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