

EDITOR'S PAGE

Susan Gilbert, CNMT



Strong and Bitter Words Indicate a Weak Cause

Writing the Editor's Page is not always an easy task. I have struggled with this column more than most. The title for this quarter's column came wrapped in a fortune cookie. The reading list came from my bookcase, and the text between has been learned the hard way.

Several years ago I first heard the phrase "inclusive language." Generally it means written or spoken words that are selected to include all readers or listeners. The English rule I was taught in school on the use of the gender pronouns (him, her, she, he) was to always use male pronouns when in doubt. Today we alternate female and male pronouns, unless a specific person is being referred to. This is done to include both women and men in the discussion. Inclusive language also may be ethnically or religiously inclusive.

The Society of Nuclear Medicine strives to be an inclusive organization, serving the needs of all nuclear medicine professionals—physicians, scientists and technologists. In addition, the councils serve special interest groups such as computer and instrumentation, brain, cardiovascular, pediatrics and other topical interests of the membership.

The Manpower Data Survey (1) gave us the most recent snapshot of the demographics of the Technologist Section. Although 46% of all technologists are men, women outnumber men four to one on the National Council. The first eight presidents of the Technologist Section were men and there have been eighteen male presidents altogether. Why are there so few men in leadership positions within the Technologist Section today?

National elections are also somewhat disturbing. Only about 15% of the membership votes in national Technologist Section elections. How can we include more Technologist Section members in the process of selecting our leaders?

Striving to keep any organization inclusive can be hard work. It is cer-

tainly easier if the membership and leadership are all alike, to the exclusion others. Although there is less conflict to deal with, the group is likely to become stagnant or worse. The greatest asset of an inclusive organization is the wide range of experience, ideas and talent that comes with all those members.

How a group deals with conflict is important. Conflict can be positive. This is hard to remember when I am trying to convince someone of my opinion. We are so concerned about what we are saying, we forget to listen to others. Sometimes the volume becomes loud or the tone high-pitched when we try even harder to be heard. Repeating is another symptom that we are trying to make our opinion heard. But how many of us listen to repeated, loud, high-pitched opinions of others? It is interesting that I often learn the most in times of conflict. Other people have had different experiences and their perspectives are outside of my own experience. I never would have thought about the issue in just that same way, and I end up learning something in the process.

A group will always come up with

a better solution than one person could alone. Diversity is our greatest strength. Most of us need to learn better conflict resolution skills. We need to be able to get all of the ideas, issues, needs and interests out on the table for discussion and resolution.

Another value of inclusive groups is consensus building. The problem with majority rules processes is that they result in winners and losers. The losers may not support the group's decision and may undermine it. Building consensus among group members results in a decision that all members can support. Each member's viewpoint is respected and valued in consensus building. Consensus is not always possible, especially as the group gets larger or when opinions have become hardened in opposite directions. Consensus should always be the goal, however.

As the Technologist Section considers the future, whether it be strategic planning by the leadership or restructuring the Technologist Section by the membership, I hope we all listen to one another and seek consensus. I hope that I remember the advice I found in a fortune cookie the next time I am a conflict participant. Strong and bitter words indicate a weak cause.

REFERENCE

1. Neagley FL, Manpower Data Committee. Manpower data survey phase 1: demographics. *J Nucl Med Technol* 1996; 24:143-144.

SUGGESTED READING

Jandt FE. *Win-win negotiating. Turning conflict into agreement*. New York, NY: John Wiley and Sons; 1985.

Bridges W. *Managing transitions. Making the most of change*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing; 1991.

Fisher R, Ury W, Patton B. *Getting to yes. Negotiating agreement without giving in*, 2nd ed; New York, NY: Penguin Books; 1991.

Ury W. *Getting past no. Negotiating your way from confrontation to cooperation*. New York, NY: Bantam Books; 1991.