

Is There Life after the Operating Room?

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Here are some of the points for discussion in this workshop:

1. The Analysis

Perhaps the biggest challenge is to develop a framework and value system for analyzing one's own career and then to act in such a way as to align reality with the value system.

2. The Preparation

Both training and temperament of the anesthesiologist may facilitate transitions to senior administrative posts within medical centers. Yet if senior administration is a goal, one need not rely entirely on happenstance. I will discuss what preparatory steps that may facilitate the transition.

3. The Trigger or Trap

You are either pulled or pushed to make a change in career. Sometimes it's both. I'll share my own experience of reasons to yield to external forces in some cases and resist them in others.

4. The Reality in the New World

Most anesthesiologists who move into senior administrative posts of a medical school or hospital continue to spend some time doing clinical work. This is the true for me also. In some cases, the reality of the dean's office bears remarkable similarity to an operating room. For instance, there are occasional sudden, overwhelming crises for which a decisive response is required. Anesthesiologists tend to excel in this setting. More often the problems are long-standing, expensive, and the subject of heavy lobbying by various constituencies. Here the anesthesiologist may have to hone very different skills or risk assassination (metaphorically speaking). I will discuss examples of each.

5. The Impact

While the individual might try to change the career, the career inevitably changes the individual. Some of the ways in which I have changed include my perspective on time, on relationships with the rich and the powerful, and on the purpose of work itself. I will discuss my own examples as well and my observations of others who have undergone career change.