

The urologist: the life of the party

Edward D. Matsumoto MD, MEd, FRCSC

Associate Professor, Division of Urology McMaster University, St. Joseph's Hospital, Hamilton, ON

See related article on page 182.

Cite as: *Can Urol Assoc J* 2011;5(3):186-7; DOI:10.5489/cuaj.11084

This article made me reflect upon what piqued my interest in urology when I began researching medical career options. What was it that initially attracted me to urology? Was it the fact I was able to “combine surgery and medicine in a single specialty” or was it “the variety of surgeries one could do in urology from endourology to the big open cases”? These were definite factors that swayed my decision to enter urology, but I still recall the impact of the urologists I met during my pre-clerkship rotation. Until this point, I was not even aware what urology was or what a urologist did. Early in medical school, our pre-clerkship group was having a session on digital rectal examination and prostate disease. I encountered a very spirited, gregarious and enthusiastic urologist. I could not get over his excitement over teaching a group of medical student how to perform a digital rectal examination. I knew after this experience, this specialty warranted further exploring.

In this issue of the *CUAJ*, Dr. MacNeily and colleagues compared differences in personality traits between urologists and non-urologist surgeons, as well as between surgeons and non-surgeons.¹ Overall, the study found urologists to be more extroverted compared to non-urological surgeons and non-surgeons. This study appears to validate my own personal thoughts of the typical urologist's personality. Dealing with “unmentionables” day in and day out does require a certain personality to thrive. But does it really matter what kind of personality you have? Must you have an “extroverted personality” with tendencies for “excitement seeking, gregariousness and positive emotions” to become a successful urologist? Of course not, but it can certainly influence the persona and the dynamics of a residency program. Anecdotally, I have seen how personalities influence

resident selection. The candidate's personality is at the forefront of many committee group discussions at the annual Urology Fair. In addition to technical skills and intelligence, how well the candidate worked with the residents, nurses and other staff during an elective rotation is a critical aspect of selection. During the resident selection process, we frequently hear of a candidate's “positive attitude,” “upbeat personality” and “outgoing nature.” For residents and staff on a residency selection committee, the candidate's personality is an important factor and helps determine the group dynamics of a urology residency program.

Obviously, not all urologists have “extroverted” personality types; there are many “introverted” urologists who are successful and admired by learners, coworkers and patients. A recent study by a group from the University of Minnesota found that the new cohort of residents, the “Generation X,” has personality attributes that differ considerably from previous group of surgical residents.² The new generation of surgical residents had more “introverted” personalities, influenced by a more individualistic upbringing partially explained by the loss of traditional family dynamics. Whether the influences of the “Generation X” have an impact on the fabric of urology persona will be an interesting study in the future.

There is something to be said about the personalities of urologists and some truth to the saying “birds of a feather, flock together.” And if this is true, it bodes well for our specialty in the future because who wouldn't want to go into a specialty associated with a bunch of outgoing, excitement-seeking, gregarious and positive individuals. I'm sure glad I did!

Competing interests: None declared.

This paper has been peer-reviewed.

References

1. MacNeily AE, Alden L, Webber E, et al. The surgical personality: comparisons between urologists, non-urologists and non-surgeons. *Can Urol Assoc J* 2011;5:182-5; DOI:10.5489/cuaj.10142
2. Swanson JA, Antonoff MB, D'Cunha J, et al. Personality profiling of the modern surgical trainee: insights into generation X. *J Surg Educ* 2010;67:417-20. Epub 2010 Nov 5.

Correspondence: Dr. Edward D. Matsumoto, Division of Urology McMaster University, St. Joseph's Hospital, 50 Charlton Ave. E. G343, Hamilton, ON L8N 4A6; fax: 905-308-7205; matsumo@mcmaster.ca