Reaching Out to Young Investigators

Roberto Bolli

It is self-evident that the future of biomedical research depends on the development of the next generation of investigators. Supporting young investigators has always been a core mission of the American Heart Association, one of its most distinguished and noble accomplishments. As an official journal of the American Heart Association, the editors and I think that Circulation Research must also contribute to this mission. Our view that young investigators are a key audience of the journal has already resulted in several initiatives.1 For example, a major reason for the introduction of Profiles in Cardiovascular Science was our desire to highlight role models that could inspire and guide early career investigators.2 More recently, the introduction of New Leaders in Cardiovascular Science3,4 was similarly motivated by our desire to offer outstanding examples to scientists who are beginning their journey in biomedical research.5 To help young investigators, we have also published “How to Obtain a National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute-Sponsored K08 and K99/R00 Grant in the Current Funding Climate.”6 In addition, every year, we invite the finalists of the Marcus and Katz Awards to apply for a K award. The second, by Yibin Wang,8 deals with sage advice to early career scientists investigators who wish to apply for a K award. The second, by Yibin Wang,4 deals with the difficult issue of rejection; this insightful and delightful essay teaches survival skills that are essential when investigators face the inevitable frustration of having a grant or an article rejected. Rejection is hard on everybody, but it is harder on younger individuals who are not accustomed to it and often do not have enough resources to overcome it. Both of these articles offer precious advice and practical suggestions that we think will be useful not only to young but also not-so-young readers. The idea of publishing Letters to a Young Investigator arose from presentations made at the 2013 meeting of the American Heart Association’s Basic Cardiovascular Science Council in Las Vegas and thus highlights the close ties between the journal and Council it serves. As the official journal of the Basic Cardiovascular Science Council, Circulation Research strongly endorses the Council’s focus on programs and initiatives targeted at young investigators.

The common theme of the two articles is that the development of a successful career requires a well-defined set of qualities (which, sadly, are becoming increasingly rare in young generations): hard work (by far, the most important), perseverance, patience, ability to postpone gratification, attention to detail, excellent writing skills, and willingness to make sacrifices. Although our contemporary culture often promotes their opposites, these virtues and skills remain the pillars on which a successful early career is built. Without them, it is impossible to succeed, no matter how talented a person may be. The absolute importance of these qualities becomes even more apparent in the current funding environment, in which the probability of rejection is greater than ever, and in the current medical environment, in which physicians find it more difficult than ever to have protected time for research. Only those with strong will, iron-clad motivation, willingness to sacrifice, and above all, tenacity and hard work will make it. The most important advice I can offer to young investigators is this: If you want to succeed, there are no short cuts, no easy ways around, no tricks; the secret is just good old-fashioned hard work and sacrifice. As Thomas Edison famously said, “Success is 10% inspiration and 90% perspiration.”

I hope that early career investigators, as well as more senior investigators, will find these articles useful. We welcome your feedback at circulation.research@circres.com.

Disclosures

None.

References


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930
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