For Some, Keep Working, But Differently
by Gene Rudd, MD

The emphasis of CMDA’s Encore ministry is to motivate and educate CMDA members to be strategic in planning the last quarter of life. Scripture is clear; we do not retire from our responsibilities as sons and daughters of God. To whatever degree we have fulfilled God’s will for our lives in previous years, we can, and should, commit to following His plan in the years ahead. For those of us age 60 to 80 (younger or older for some), when we slow down or cease from the hectic pace of a busy professional career, we have the opportunity to seek how God will use our time, talent and resources for His glory.

In this edition of CMDA Encore, I want to focus on the option of staying involved (to some degree) with our healthcare skills. God will no doubt guide some of us to do so. There are plenty of examples among our colleagues.

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I know; some of you are so burned out from years of hard work and the increasing frustration of healthcare. In response, you may wish to walk away and leave it all behind. The 2018 National Physicians Survey revealed that six out of 10 times a patient sees a physician, the physician does not want to be there! The data show that the majority of us are longing for early retirement. It’s a sad commentary on the failure of the current healthcare system to allow healthcare relationships to thrive. The very patient-physician relationship that can be healing to the patient is also healing to the physician. Unfortunately, the technology and business influences in healthcare have sabotaged that for many.

But it doesn’t have to be that way, especially as we transition into the time of life when we are financially able to live without a paycheck. Some of use our financial freedom to retire to the golf course, only to realize that a life fully focused on leisure activities results in emptiness. It is hard to believe until you would experience that, but I hear it over and over. That’s why I encourage each of us to consider what meaningful Kingdom work God has for us to do, then strategically plan for that to happen. What if you could practice medicine at a slower pace, taking the time needed to bring healing to your patient’s body, mind and spirit? Some practice opportunities allow just that. We just have to find them. And we have to be willing to work for less...or nothing at all. Clinics for the poor that need help are willing to take physicians a few hours a week. They provide a place to work, staff and administrative support and even medical liability coverage. Ask those who do this to tell you about their experience. “Joy” is a word often used.

If clinical healthcare is no longer the path God has for you, consider mentoring. No, you didn’t have to wear sandals and walk with Jesus for three years to qualify as a mentor. You simply have to spend time with someone coming along behind you. Invite students and residents to your home once a week or once a month. You will likely have the greatest blessing.

Another option is to teach and share your knowledge and life experiences. Our Medical Education International program provides opportunities for you to take short-term teaching trips into many countries around the world. (See Jim Smith’s article.)

If you have been working and are ready to “retire” from your current career, you probably need a few weeks or months to decompress. Also use that time to seek God’s will for the next phase of life. If you are prone to being a workaholic, don’t jump out of the frying pan into the fire. Instead, transition slowly...and purposefully. Take a vacation; build a stronger bond with your spouse; visit the kids and grandkids; and...play some golf! But also carve out time focus on what God has next. You may benefit from some help with this. Read Ken Jones’ article in this edition about CMDA’s coaching ministry. CMDA’s coaches are men and women who are trained to help you make transitions in life.
Throughout the 16+ years I’ve been coaching CMDA healthcare professionals, there is no question that one of the most frequent reasons physicians and dentists have sought the services of a CMDA Life and Leadership Coach has been what I call the “What next?” question.

An individual has dedicated years to the practice of healthcare, and now the “end” of practice is approaching. In particular, three issues seem to be most prevalent:

1. How do I unplug from the structured and disciplined life of healthcare I’ve been focused on for the last 30 or 40 years? What will I do with all my time?

2. What is God saying to me about this season of my life? And how do I know God’s direction? In other words, what does God want me to do…now?

3. What does the process of a new normal look like for me? I’ve worked all my life knowing that someday, I’d get to slow down, even retire. But now that I’m there, what does the change, transition and transformation process involve?

Working with a physician life development coach on discovering answers to these questions has proven to be a great blessing to doctors approaching their encore years. The benefit of having a coach is not found in the answers they bring, but rather, the questions they introduce that promote discovery and movement forward into the new and exciting plan God has in mind.

Coaches provide opportunity for:

**Examining options:** A skilled coach helps with thinking through all the options.

**Developing specific strategies and timelines:** Coaches can provide insight, accountability and encouragement in planning and execution.

**Discovering new and exciting opportunities for growth and impact:** A coach can help explore the options that are obvious, as well as facilitate dreaming and examining things not so obvious.

Most of us dream of slowing down, someday. But between the dreaming and the coming true, there can be many challenges and much thinking that needs to happen. Working with a coach can be a tremendous tool for unlocking the next step in the journey.
A Colleague Who Found Purpose in Retirement

From Academics to Post-employment Kingdom Work
by Jim Smith, MD

Like many older doctors, retirement was my goal. More specifically, after teaching at CMDA’s annual Continuing Medical and Dental Education conference for missionaries for many years, I wanted to visit missionaries and actually help them do cases rather than just give lectures every two years.

However, the Lord took me in a different direction. After a six-week sabbatical at the National University of Singapore, I was offered a position as Visiting Professor. This gave me the opportunity to teach medical students and be program director for the Singapore ENT residency program. What I had planned to be a one-year visit led to staying for two and a half years, followed by repeat visits as a consultant and external examiner for the otolaryngology master’s of medicine degree. I did not realize at the time that the Lord was giving me valuable experience in a cross-cultural medical student teaching and residency training setting, which He could later use in short-term missions.

When I returned from Singapore, Dr. Bob Schindler invited me to be a member of the COIMEA Commission (now Medical Education International). With my background in academics and my experience in Singapore, MEI was a perfect fit to use my experience for short-term educational mission trips. Having been involved with the CMDE Conference, I had many contacts with missionaries in Africa and Asia, which gave me an opportunity to bring short-term teams to support their activities.

One of my favorite verses is Proverbs 16:9, “A man’s heart deviseth his way: but the Lord directeth his steps” (KJV). As I look back at my career and where the Lord led me, I never realized He would be able to use my academic experience in missions.

When I first started doing teaching trips with MEI, I would think maybe the Lord will let me do this for another five years. I am now into my fourth five-year plan and still find serving Him in this way challenging, fulfilling and a blessing.

My challenge to you is that as the Lord opens doors for you to do things professionally, walk through them. The Lord may be preparing you to serve Him in your retirement years in ways you would have never thought possible. Look for opportunities to serve and I’m sure the Lord will bless more than you ever expected.

Do you have a story to share?
Share how you transitioned to retirement, a humorous story, an award you received, ministry you are now doing, etc. with us at gene.rudd@cmda.org. We will consider it for future editions of CMDA Encore.
Nativity

Nativity: the term we use for the setting of Jesus’ birth. Each Christmas we bring out our nativity sets to remember and honor the occasion. But what transformed that dirty, stinky stable into the beautiful displays that we place on our tabletops? Answer: the presence of the Son of God.

And as He transformed the world when He entered time and space at His birth, so He transforms us as He enters into our lives. We become a beautiful display to our Heaven Father. Christmas Blessings!

Funny Bone

Retirement shouldn’t be completely serious.
(Some of this humor wrongly suggests that retirement is all fun and games, but just ignore that for a minute.)

A man was reading yesterday’s newspaper when he came upon a headline he thought worth sharing with his wife. “Hey, honey. Listen to this. It says that men lose memory cells earlier than women.” His wife responded, “It must be true. You read that headline to me yesterday.”