

Notes on “*Timeless Lessons from the Past and Present Leaders of Cardiothoracic Surgery - Part I – Professional Accomplishment*” by Jason J. Han MD, John Kelly MD, Amit Iyengar MD, Will Patrick MD, Ibrahim Sultan MD

By Jason J Han MD, editor

*Trainees are encouraged to join the discussion at <https://twitter.com/tssmn>. Please add comments in the twitter chats or in the form of letter to the editor.*

This article from the June issue of the *Journal of Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgery* by Drs. Han, Kelly, Iyengar, Patrick and Sultan spark renewed interest in one of the most profound and timeless domains in surgical education during a time of rapid technological advancement and big data – character, wisdom, perspective.

First, its design – the authors reviewed the presidential addresses and transcribed personal interviews of 28 AATS presidents and distilled essential advice that would behoove any current and aspiring surgeons. Among the selected are some of the most revered mentors in recent memory – Timothy Gardner, Lawrence Cohn, Irving L Kron, Aldo R Castaneda.

Seven major themes were identified and divided into a series of two manuscripts –

*Manuscript #1 – Professional accomplishment*

- 1) Attainment of surgical excellence
- 2) Mentorship
- 3) Scholarship and innovation

*Manuscript #2*

- 4) Humanism and the doctor-patient relationship
- 5) Well-being and work life balance
- 6) Leadership
- 7) The future of CTS and its resident education

Here were some of the most commonly shared advice from our mentors:

Regarding technical excellence – no matter which era or what setting, a cardiothoracic surgeon must primarily be an excellent surgeon, comprised of technical skill and cognitive ability. It may partly be innate, but excellent must primarily be achieved through sustained efforts. It requires a fanatical dedication to the craft. It requires coming back even stronger after failures.

Regarding mentorship – a true mentorship is hands-on, and not taught from the office. It is both personal and professional. Most importantly, it requires active participation from both the mentor and the mentee in order to be fruitful.

Regarding scholarship and innovation, which are loosely deemed one of the pillars of a “triple threat” in academic surgery, the mentors note that the definition of scholarship and research are rapidly expanding. It ranges from basic science to outcomes research. It incorporates global health, public policy and ethics. Whatever area of scholarship one wishes to participate in, the mentors consistently emphasized the importance of doing so as it ultimately advances the field and promotes safer and better patient care.

Lastly, the authors reflect on the importance of these themes and advice in their own budding careers. They describe their renewed enthusiasm for practicing their craft, both inside and outside of the operating room, for recognizing their own potential to serve as mentors even at early stages of their careers to those who look up to them for advice, and for continuing to experiment with new frontiers in medical research such as those involving technology and social media.

What are you inspired to do after hearing these timeless lessons?

Overall, this thought-provoking article by Drs. Han, Kelly, Iyengar, Patrick and Sultan is a must-read for all trainees. If you are interested in learning more, please find [the full article here](#) at the Journal of Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgery.