

Editorial

Letter to the Editorial Board

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I have been asked to write an editorial for the journal –“Austin Journal of Anatomy”, of which I have been invited to be an editorial member. Instinctively, I wondered aloud what could be done to make this journal unique amongst the many out there in the field.

As an open access journal, I believe here presents an opportunity for anatomists to gain as wide an audience as possible. The study of human anatomy has come a long way and has always been controversial. What is indisputable is the fact that all health care workers need to understand the subject in order to effectively do their job. Using this platform, I would also like to present some unconventional thoughts on how the subject should be taught to the modern day pupils. It has been aptly highlighted in the past that the subject is fast changing [1], and that the wind of change continues to blow even as we speak [2]. We should and seize the opportunity to lead the change within the medical curriculum as advocated earlier by an eminent anatomist [3].

To reiterate, the subject of anatomy for all its glory in the past, is no longer the same. Times have changed, people have changed, and so the subject curriculum must to. Currently, some medical schools do not have dissection classes anymore[4], and despite this somewhat worrying trend, these students will still earn the rite of passage to becoming practicing doctors in the future. Furthermore, in my recent

conversation with a prosector, he sounded that his job is a dying trade. Could this be a glimpse into what the future holds?

Despite the above trend, I believe that anatomy will always be relevant to the practice of surgery but the approach has to change. One should not be rote memorizing the 15 branches of the maxillary artery but instead understand why some of these branches are important (e.g. the middle meningeal artery). One needs to see that anatomy is similar to the subject of geography. Without it, one will have great difficulties in navigating the correct path to the destination, and also how to avoid all possible pitfalls.

Perhaps, we should seriously have more open book examinations in teaching the subject. Using the geography metaphor again, it makes no sense to attempt to memorize all the street names in the city one just relocated into. Instead, one should learn how to use the directory, or the GPS, so that one can move around effortlessly. Likewise, teach the doctors or surgeons to use the anatomical atlases to become a better clinician. Try not to know everything but just the essentials so that one can make an incision without cutting a blood vessel or nerve during the procedure. That requires ability to decipher information from the atlases and books.

In closing, I am excited for the journal and I look forward to the many opportunities that lie ahead.

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