



## Reflections: *Summer Thoughts*

Lucien Latulippe, MD, FRCP



We have all probably noticed that the first contact between a medical student and his or her patient is usually warm, well-intentioned and aimed at building a helping relationship.

We probably all share a high regard for doctors who have excellent listening skills, who take the time and care to truly and

From childhood to adolescence and into adulthood, we are pushed to achieve: "Money, a career, recognition, acceptance and even affection. We are taught to monitor and cultivate our vision

and know and care to truly and In

Our obsession with performance and yield leaves little room for introspection or for the helping relationships essential for really understanding others. Acceleration seems to be the motto for most people; a parody of the Swiss clock-making mentality says, "Here in the Occident, we can tell you the exact time, but you don't have it."

Another efficiency characteristic of today's society is to disseminate a plethora of information that is often confused with learning.

For example, while the news is on television, one section of the screen informs us that a celebrity has just

in my opinion, resides their capacity to cast a new light onto a given situation.

Their approach leaves room for introspection, seeks to test boundaries and shuns compromise, routine and mediocrity. It is an approach that is geared towards new knowledge and continuous training.

Yet, how can a quality of such importance thin down and be relegated to the back burner? Is it the societal imperative of efficiency, performance and yield that is partly responsible for this?

---

**Lucien Latulippe, MD, FRCP**  
 Professor of Medicine  
 Department of Rheumatology and Palliative Care  
 Centre Hospitalier de l'Université Laval  
 Sainte-Foy, Québec

died, while another informs us that stocks are mishandled in Tokyo, on the rise in Paris and stable in other countries. We are then informed of today's temperature, tomorrow's and the coming week's. Across the bottom of the screen, international, local and sports news are broadcasted. And, as if that were not enough overload, we occasionally talk on the phone at the same time.

Could we reasonably argue that this incessant flow of information contaminates us, that we, as individuals, are afflicted with a veritable disease? How do we successfully integrate this flow of information into our brains?

And when we meet with a patient, have we integrated all our knowledge and experience as it should be? The question certainly merits reflection.

My reflection on efficiency and yield was triggered by the many conversations I had in the context of my work in palliative care. Rarely, if ever, have patients complained of having spent too much time with their family and loved ones. Rarely, if ever, have patients expressed the desire to work more. Rarely, if ever, has anyone complained of having taken too long a vacation.

In response to my editorial on resilience,<sup>2</sup> a doctor sent me a letter that

touched me deeply. He pointed out that my editorial made him reflect on the essential priorities and values in life. I hope that he will continue this pursuit, allowing him to live differently, rather than wait for change.

I hope you, too, may learn to live differently and appreciate the smaller pleasures of life. We should remind ourselves often that many things are yet to be done, but, we cannot do them all.

---



#### References

1. van Breemen P: *Trouver Dieu en toutes choses*. Les Éditions du cerf, Paris, 1995. p. 7-225.
2. Latulippe L: Resilience: Sustaining One's Inner-Being. *CJCME* 2004; 16(7):1-4.