

*"The life of the dead is placed in the memory of the living."*

—Marcus Tullius Cicero

## Losing a Colleague

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I had a particularly pithy and (hopefully) witty thing planned for this month, but as I've been told a few times, don't plan too far ahead. Maybe no further than that next step. I lost a good friend, colleague, and great man this week. That's actually being massively greedy, and I apologize. A *lot* of us lost a good friend, colleague, and great man this week.

Just a few observations about what we are all feeling.

Two competing lines of thought have been presented to me over the years about our value, not to our families and friends, but to our workplace. One of my prior chairs said repeatedly that "no one is irreplaceable." Okay.

Another one of my mentors said repeatedly that you instead *strive* to make yourself irreplaceable, and hopefully you get there. I choose to follow this thinking. Sure, you can hire someone to work a shift, make some widgets, fill a chair, or be around, but that is different than the feeling you get from a colleague who shares respect, life's moments, a drink or a meal, feelings, and dreams with you. That is entirely different and much more in line with reality, I think.

So, I have a heavy heart sitting here writing this all down. Mortality is a construct that becomes much more real to you as you get older (it really starts hitting when you receive that first mailing from AARP). Physicians are certainly not immune to the precarious nature of life. Maybe we are even more aware of it; I'm not sure.

I've been working long enough to say this with confidence: JT was one of the smartest folks I've had the pleasure of working with, an educator and a sharer of knowledge. He loved approaching an imaging study that others found confusing or inscrutable and often worked through the case, to a reasonable and (more often than not) correct answer, OUT LOUD, letting us all see how he was thinking. A superpower. Funny, and with a little edge that could be appreciated—never cutting, only insightful.

*So, JT, we miss you already. You are, indeed, irreplaceable.*

Work is going to be a little less happy for the next few months. I'm confident we will get someone to fill the chair, but we will never replace the man.

Keep doing that good work. Hug your kids, appreciate your colleagues. Mahalo.