



Focus on the Future

Guest Predictions: Michael Schwebler

Guest Predictions is a regular Agenda feature in which we interview leaders in a number of professions for their opinion on questions that effect us all.

Michael Schwebler is the Chief Operating Officer of Midwest Ultrasound Inc., and Professional Readers Group Inc., both subsidiaries of The Christ Hospital in Cincinnati Ohio. Michael is the current elected President (2008-2009) of the Society For Vascular Ultrasound "SVU." Outside the office Michael is a coach for the United States Soccer Federation working on the Olympic Development and coaching education staff for Ohio and Kentucky.

Q: What changes in your professional environment in the past 3-5 years have you found to be the most beneficial?

A: The digital age has had the greatest measurable impact on our industry. Improvements in communication and data management have revolutionized the way healthcare functions. Specific to vascular ultrasound, digital technology has improved every aspect of the vascular ultrasound professional's life from image acquisition and data management to web based networking and distance learning.

Q: What changes have been the most troubling to you?

A: Growing demand on the healthcare system. The baby boomer demographic along with a proliferation of minimally invasive treatment options has created unprecedented demand for cardiovascular services at a time when our economic system is maximally burdened. The resulting trend is increased demand for quality and quantity at a lower cost. I believe the system is approaching a critical breakpoint.

Q: How will globalization (e.g. the emergence of new global powers, such as China and India) affect your professional area in the near term?

A: Our industry, from a patient care perspective, is insulated from global competition. There is anecdotal evidence of patients seeking healthcare in countries like India for better pricing, however I believe this trend to be "presently" insignificant. Conversely, I believe the emergence of these markets will create significant opportunities for individuals in our industry who are willing to travel in support of equipment vendors and educators as these powers seek to enhance their vascular medicine programs.

Q: What significant challenges might be anticipated in your professional area in the next few years?

A: The primary challenge will be delivering the quality and quantity of care demanded within the economic constraints both present and anticipated. The other significant challenge is man power. Allied health is grossly under populated and vascular ultrasound is a prime example.

There is a clear need for well organized and funded grass roots efforts designed to attract younger talent to the field.

Q: What are the greatest challenges confronting young professionals in Western culture today?

A: In allied health and the vascular ultrasound profession in particular, technology and economics present the greatest challenges. Technological advances are occurring at such a rapid rate that professionals can scarcely stay current. Ironically, these same technology changes along with economic pressure may put the need for highly skilled labor at risk as Washington looks to reform our healthcare system.