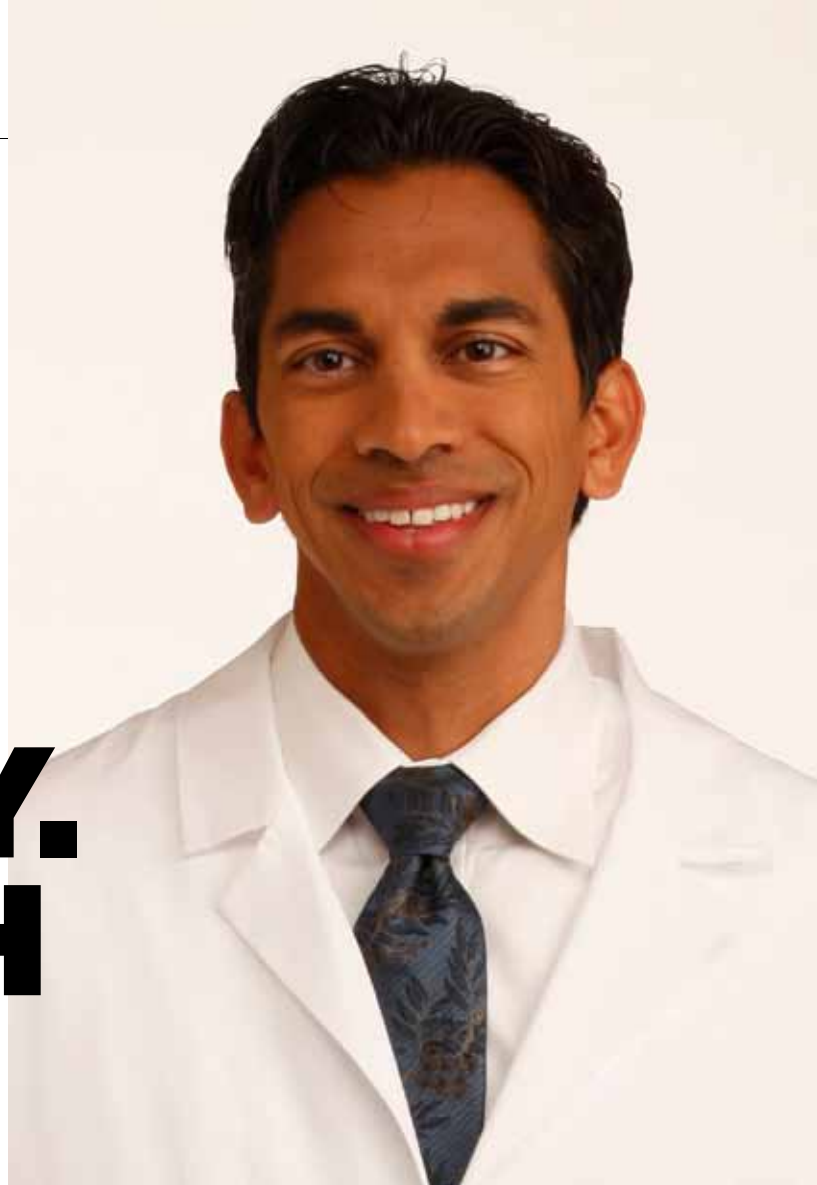


DR. MIHIR Y. PARIKH

President of the San Diego
County Medical Society
by Sherry Nooravi, PsyD



The following interview is part seven of an eight-part leadership series, with interviews conducted by organizational psychologist Dr. Sherry Nooravi. See the January issue for an interview with Dr. Paul Bernstein, medical director and chief of staff at Kaiser Permanente San Diego; the February issue for an interview with Dr. Wendy Buchi, CEO of IGO Medical Group; the March issue for an interview with Dr. Steven Green, CMO, Sharp Rees-Stealy Medical Group; the May issue for an interview with Dr. John Jenrette, CEO of Sharp Community Medical Group; the June issue for an interview with Dr. James E. LaBelle, CMO of Scripps Health; and the September issue for an interview with Dr. Thomas R. Moore, CEO of UC San Diego Faculty Practice.

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Question: What is your leadership philosophy?

Answer: I like to know who the audience or team is and influence them by tailoring the message. Sometimes you have to be a leader by being vocal and sometimes by being silent. If a group doesn't know what they are doing, be an educator. If a group knows what they are doing, let the team discover the best solution. They may know the topic but need assistance in the final vision. A leader identifies where the missing pieces are and helps fill them in.

There are three things that I believe help me lead any time I'm working

with a group. First, I learn who my audience is, and I take the time to listen to their concerns and ideas, both individually and as a group. Second, I'll learn what their strengths and weaknesses are and how I can help them work toward their goals and the organization's goals. Last, I make sure that everyone shares a common final goal. At the San Diego County Medical Society, it is to create a medical society that unites the voice of all physicians by having a membership that is constantly growing. In our medical office, the mission is to be the best ophthalmology practice in San Diego.

It is also very important to have diversity on your team. Conceptually, having a team that is uniform makes discussions short and meetings quick. With a diverse team, you get more challenges and longer meetings before final conclusions are reached. The final product, however, tends to have broader appeal to the mass population because it has been vetted by a diverse team.

Question: What should physicians do to prepare for the future of healthcare?

Answer: I predict there will be a lot of change in healthcare and how it is delivered. It is currently too expensive, and patients aren't happy. In the next 10 years, there will be many new layers of technology, and, as physicians, you don't want to be the "Barnes and Noble" practice. Ask lots of questions to people who might know the answers. Rather than commiserating and complaining with your colleagues, talk to the leaders of innovative healthcare solutions, band with other people who are in your mode of practice, and join CMA and AMA and participate in the political process.

Question: What advice do you have for young/incoming physician leaders?

Answer: Be excellent at what you are doing, be passionate, and know your field of medicine better than any nonphysician. Accept that medicine is a business — it's the dark side of the field. Learn how your employer is recruiting patients, how the cash flows in your business, and who is looking at these arrangements (doctors or MBAs) and making sure that doctors and patients are protected.

Also ask if you can have access to the financials. At big groups, they may just give you quality metrics and the number of patients you need to see, etc. There is a financial metric tied to everything, including patient quality. You need access to the financials behind the quality metrics.

Question: What does organizational culture mean to you, and how do you drive it?

Answer: Organizational culture is about setting the tone, the mood, and the expectation. What is the vibe? Do you have a winning culture or a losing culture where every day is the same? I personally like to have a winning, innovative, cutting-edge culture. Whether at the office or on the board of the Medical Society, I want people

to say, "What a great team. These people seem to know what they are doing." I like to push hard and demand excellence. I always ask, "How can we be better?" In my practice, when I go to conferences, I try to meet interesting people who are implementing new ways of delivering better eye care. In terms of the Medical Society, we are always trying to discover new ways to recruit new members, like hosting social events so doctors can meet their colleagues from other healthcare systems.

Question: What has worked for engaging your staff that CEOs and leaders in other industries can learn from?

Answer: You have to build a product that people want. If the business slows down, reevaluate the situation and explore if the product or the branding needs to be strengthened. Have a rollout plan and demand excellence. Ask, "Is it possible to be the leader in this space, and what is it going to take to get us there?" Sell that vision with positive energy and knowledge to your team, and be willing to change if your team says your idea is weak. When you decide to make a change, people may be hesitant or even reluctant to accept it. But change can be good; it's an opportunity to get better. **SDP**



Dr. Nooravi is an organizational psychologist and CEO of Strategy Meets Performance, a leadership consulting firm that focuses on helping CEOs of fast-growth companies shape engaging, innovative, and customer-driven cultures through executive coaching and senior team facilitation. She has been named "Trailblazer of the Year" for her research on the best practices of CEOs of high performing organizations. She can be reached at sherry@strategymeetsperformance.com or at (312) 286-0325.

Points to Consider

1.

That's a Good Idea.

Do you have openness to listen to your group's ideas? Do you create a forum for them to share and brainstorm new possibilities?

2.

Diversity Brings More.

Do you choose team members who are like you and easy to work with, or do you opt for more diverse members who can present different views that you may not have considered?

3.

What's Going on Out There?

What are you doing to learn more about new technology? Do you attend conferences, talk to your colleagues, and get involved in your local and political systems, or do you complain that "things just aren't the way they used to be"?

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