

Letters

Reflections of a Pupil

I read “Summoning Your Inner Verghese” (Opinion, October), in which Ruth Williams, MD, reflects on the gifts of storytelling in the ophthalmology world, and it reminded me of a book I recently read: *Reflections of a Pupil* by Canadian ophthalmologist R. Rishi Gupta, MD, FRCSC. I wish I had known about his book when I was a resident, and I believe his commentary on what to expect in our field as trainees and lifelong learners is unique and worthwhile.

Reflections of a Pupil consists of lessons learned from Dr. Gupta’s meaningful interactions with patients, colleagues, and mentors. Each digestible chapter includes a short anecdote and a single piece of advice, such as “Perfect Is the Enemy of Good,” “Pick Up the Phone,” “Always Validate Your Patient’s Experience,” and “Don’t Let the Fall Crush You.” You may have heard these phrases before, but I assure you that Dr. Gupta has reflected carefully on them and has expressed them in trim prose. His ability to communicate insights gleaned from his own successes and failures is unparalleled. He humanizes what it means to become an ophthalmologist, which is especially important to hear in early residency when the imposter syndrome is crushing. Dr. Gupta is frank about his own growing pains, and he normalizes these pains in a field that otherwise likes to appear pristine and flawless. Experience itself is an effective teacher, and there will be no substitute for the raw emotion in the moment when you first cause a posterior capsular rent. But you can prepare and debrief with Dr. Gupta. Beyond the operating room, he has numerous tips for managing expectations with unreasonable patients, running an efficient clinic even while putting out fires, and building a career that is fulfilling and rewarding. None of these things are easy to handle, but you can be better prepared having read Dr. Gupta’s book and hearing his perspective.

We can all agree that medicine is humbling. There is no escape from lifelong learning. Diseases will continue to test the limits of how we understand them, technology will change the way we operate and manage conditions, and patients will continue to surprise us. There is something in this book for ophthalmologists at every step of the way. For residents, there are high-yield, boiled-down pearls for what’s to come. For a young attending, there are reminders of lessons you’ve picked up as well as approaches you haven’t yet considered. And for a seasoned attending, there is a trip down memory lane and a window into the mind of a new generation of ophthalmologists. This book belongs on your bookshelf next to your *Basic and Clinical Science Course*.

Ryan Lange, MD
Chicago

Join the Fight for Your Profession

Attendance at Mid-Year Forum 2024 is arguably more important than in prior years. Not only has ophthalmology seen increasingly aggressive optometric scope battles nationwide, but also the looming Veterans Affairs (VA) Federal Supremacy Project and its potential implications cannot be ignored. Now more than ever, we need every ophthalmologist to stand up and petition for surgery by surgeons.

The meeting, April 17-20, in Washington, D.C., brings together all levels of Academy and society leaders. The highlight of the meeting for me is always Congressional Advocacy Day, where we as physicians have the opportunity to meet with our legislators and their staffers on Capitol Hill. The frank conversations that arise in those small and personal talks can have reverberant effects. These one-on-one meetings allow us to reach the very policymakers who—with a strike of a pen or a raised hand—can make decisions that have a lasting impact on our careers and future patient care.

During last year’s Congressional Advocacy Day, we were able to bolster significant support from our congressional representatives in favor of more transparency into the changing policies within the VA system. We not only raised awareness but also forged many alliances that have been pivotal in pushing the conversation forward. The battle is not over, and we need to continue to petition for the highest quality of surgical care for our veterans.

There are many reasons to join the discussion. Maybe you are concerned about how your educational training will be affected in a future VA setting as an ophthalmology resident. Perhaps you question how you will be able to maintain your staff as continued Medicare reimbursement cuts make owning a private practice financially challenging. Or, maybe your home state lost a scope battle, so the way you practice medicine and deliver patient care will soon look vastly different. Whatever your reason may be, we all have something at stake from an advocacy perspective. I urge you to join the fight and make your voice heard. Please attend Mid-Year Forum; ophthalmology needs your support now more than ever.

Erica Renee Alvarez, MD
El Paso, Texas

EDITORS’ NOTE: Learn more about Mid-Year Forum 2024 in Academy Notebook (page 51) and register at aao.org/myf. Preregistration is available until April 1. The registration fee is \$225 through March 11. After that, it is \$325. There is also an option to register to participate only in Congressional Advocacy Day for free. If you’re a trainee, look into the Advocacy Ambassador Program at aao.org/mid-year-forum/advocacy-ambassador-program.