

TRUTH IN CONFLICT



To those who know me, it probably comes as no surprise that I tend to think progressively. Accordingly, I found myself watching *CNN* the other night. At the end of my viewing experience, I walked away confident that my views

were 100% correct. It was extremely satisfying. However, that is not the purpose of a free press.

This phenomenon is not exclusive to *CNN*. *Fox News* provides the same satisfaction for those on the opposite side of the aisle. Confirmation bias—the tendency to look for or acknowledge only information that confirms our existing beliefs—isn't exclusive to the news. It is pretty common behavior. And why not? As anyone with children will tell you, being challenged all the time is exhausting. But, although confirmation bias is good for keeping the peace, it does little to better us as a society.

Canadian psychology professor Jordan Peterson, PhD, rose to notoriety a few years ago when he staunchly opposed a bill that would require him to use nonspecific gender pronouns. He didn't take exception to using the pronouns; he took exception to the government's enforcement methods. He argued that, if a society is to grow, enacting laws in an attempt to force alignment actually has the opposite effect and causes greater division by alienating opponents. If we looked to history, he said, we would see that a society only truly evolves to become more just and more tolerant if it is able to reach those decisions on its own, and this consensus comes only from open debate.

Professor Peterson is a bit of a polarizing figure, but he makes an important point: If you want to drive change, you must be willing to offend and be offended, because the conflicting views that come from free thinking drive the debate required for change. This all must be done with mutual respect and decorum. It is important to keep this in mind as we look to innovate and grow our field. Given the scientific method that brings so much conformity to our training, we must rely on our views as individuals to drive the debate that will bring change, and this requires diversity.

I am very lucky that my work provides me with the opportunity to travel and meet other providers from across the globe and to have many of them come visit me. Sharing how we work, how we think, how we see the world, and how we approach our daily lives is maybe the most enriching part of

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my job. The insights we share—and, more important, those we don't—provide perspectives that help me to be a better doctor, innovator, and person.

In this issue of *GT*, we hear from nine women leaders in glaucoma whose talent is extremely impressive. In general, the talent we have across an already diverse field is promising. But we are still a long way from where we need to be. If we want our field to grow, we should not just embrace diversity but actively pursue it. We must make it a point to work alongside those whose views differ from ours in order to encourage debate.

Driving change in medicine is hard enough. Spending our days around people with whom we always agree won't make it any easier. However, if we can listen as passionately as we speak, then our differences will give us the perspective we need to grow as caregivers and as a society—and with it, the ability to tolerate cable news now and again. ■

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