

DBS PACademy Acceptance Speech 2017

Thank you so much for this honor. I am truly humbled to be in the presence of so many of my teachers whose work I respect so highly. It's a precious thing to me to be part of the this community. And, in the words of **Brett Moran**, last year's winner of the PACademy award, "You are an enthusiastic, intelligent and collegial bunch, and one doesn't get to say that in too many professions."

Aside from great medical software, there are at least two other great things that come from the great state Wisconsin. Physician Builders and ... wait for it ... butter. As absurd as it may sound, I want to spend the next two minutes talking about how these three things — Epic software, physician builders, and butter — are related. My goal is to convince you to return to your home institutions and advocate for your physician builders to get them training, security, and meaningful work.

The year 1878, long before Epic was born (but after MUMPS day 1), was an important year in butter making because that's when **Gustav de Laval**, a Swedish engineer, developed the centrifugal cream separator.¹ By dramatically shortening the time it took to raise the cream from the milk, this device provided a short-cut which upended millennia of butter making practices. By doing so, it fostered an exponential rise in the amount of butter that could be made. What used to take a day or two to collect, and an hour or two to churn, can now be produced in just 6 seconds.

Like all technological innovations, this one had both good and bad consequences.

On the good side, it means that,

- We have vastly more butter available to us.
- And, the butter we buy is fresher and of a more uniform quality and texture than at any point in history.

On the bad side:

- We've lost an appreciation for locally made, handcrafted butter which had a cultured tang, and whose tastes and colors depended on place, species and season.

Those of us who have been in medicine for the past 20 years recognize that our industry has undergone a similar change with technology: The modern electronic health record allows vastly increased throughput of patient data with increased efficiencies and security. But, the production of those data is increasingly consolidated in large health

¹ Khosrova, Elaine. Butter: A rich history. Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: 2016).

systems which care for populations through the applications of protocol-centric, homogenized guidelines. We are at serious risk of losing the flavor of the individual doctor-patient relationship, the efficient idiosyncrasies of the lone practicing clinician, and the ability of the small guy or gal to innovate.

Is that it then? Are we stuck?

It turns out that smart people who love butter have figured out how to have the best of both worlds: they are identifying the compounds in cultured butter, and injecting them into the modern product. They are producing quality butter, with the character and tastes of the artisanal. They are embracing the new, but figuring out how to couple it with the best of the old.

If you let them, your physician informaticists are poised to perform that same kind of alchemy in your systems — to embrace the new, but to make it better for themselves, your colleagues, and our patients.

My plea to you is that you should go back to your organizations and advocate for developing a deep talent pool of physician informaticists. Give them training. Give them security. Give them meaningful work to do. Give them a voice. And allow them to re-introduce some of what has been lost in the homogenization of the 6 second patient.

This award really belongs to the people who have fostered my development as a physician informaticist.

Thank you to:

- **David Kaelber** for creating such an amazing team, and always believing in us.
- Thank you to **Peter J. Greco**, an inaugural winner of this award, for blazing the trail that so many of us are following, and for your continued and tireless mentoring of me.
- Thanks to **Don Reichert, Kim Gleine, Jon Siff, Crystal Williams, Chris Collins**, and our other past and present colleagues at MetroHealth (including **Greg Norris** and **Bonnie Poprock**) who have made our jobs possible.
- Thanks to all of our **Epic TS's**, and especially **Billy LaLuzerne** and **Thane Wolcott**.
- Thanks to the **immunization developers** — **Narasimha Velagaleti, Gil Caspi, Charlie Seidell**, and **Uma Veggalam** — and their teams.
- And most of all, thanks to my life-partner, **Rebecca**, and **our three sons**, who continue to humor me by pretending to be somewhat interested in the projects that I'm working on, and for tolerating my odd working hours.

Finally, thank you to all of you for creating a community that sets aside competition and problem solves together.