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Mentoring in pathology: Review and case study with observations on Dunbar's number

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There have been many articles about mentoring but most deal with short-term effects and assume few mentors per person, and that mentoring is in the past and unidirectional. We present the forty-year mentoring influence of one physician researcher/kidney pathologist, Liliane Striker, on the career of another, Kim Solez. The application of the technological singularity to medicine, development of the Technology and Future of Medicine course, and expansion of Virchow's Medicine Writ Large idea in Dr. Solez's career can all be traced back to 1974 conversations between Drs. Striker and Solez. Now through Dr. Solez's students one can imagine the influence of those 1974 ideas propagating for a hundred years or longer. Mentoring/influencing effects are active, ongoing, and in the present. The process involves not just conventional mentoring, but also reverse, collaborative, and natural mentoring. Dunbar's Number, a concept previously used to describe the 150 meaningful relationships possible for human beings (range 100-200) based on cognitive limits and neocortex size, here fits the number of mentors/influencers in one lifetime in memory at one time. The large number of influencers here is related to the requirements of consensus generation worldwide leading the Banff classification process over the past twenty-three years. Further investigation will determine if 150 mentors/influencers per person applies only in this case or is a human limit that can be generalized. The present paper may stimulate others to generate mentor/influencer lists that can bring new insights to the history of ideas and individuals in medicine and science generally.

Biography

Kim Solez, MD, FRCPC, is a Professor of Pathology at the University of Alberta, and President and CEO of Transpath Inc., is one of the world's foremost kidney pathologists. He is the father of the Banff classification that sets standards worldwide for how biopsies from kidney and other solid organ transplants are interpreted, and started the post-earthquake disaster relief task force of the International Society of Nephrology. He is a popular blogger on internetevolution.com, and directs NKF cyber Nephrology, a joint venture of the National Kidney Foundation (U.S.) and the University of Alberta. He has also created many educational videos for the Lifeboat Foundation.

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