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**COVER LETTER**

Dear Editor,

This is to confirm that the article entitled “*Ethics of Leadership: A conversation with Professor Lloyd Brooks Minor, the Carl and Elizabeth Naumann Dean of Stanford University School of Medicine*” submitted to the Indian Journal of Medical Ethics is original and has been co-authored by the undersigned. All authors have participated in the work sufficiently to meet the ICMJE guidelines for authorship. All have read and approved the manuscript.

The submission is not under consideration for publication in any other journal. The authors did not receive any sponsorship, or funding towards the completion of this manuscript. We have no relevant competing interests, financial or otherwise, to declare towards the preparation of this manuscript. We have read the terms and conditions of authorship of IJME and accept them.

We give consent to Dr Ashish Goel to act as the author for correspondence.

With regards

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**TITLE**

**Ethics of Leadership: A conversation with Professor Lloyd Brooks Minor, the Carl and Elizabeth Naumann Dean of Stanford University School of Medicine**

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STATEMENT OF COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors did not receive any sponsorship, or funding towards the completion of this manuscript. We have no relevant competing interests, financial or otherwise, to declare towards the preparation of this manuscript. We have read the terms and conditions of authorship of IJME and accept them.

STATEMENT OF SIMILAR SUBMISSIONS

We declare that we have not submitted or published any manuscript previously which is very similar to the current work

**MAIN MANUSCRIPT**

**Introduction**

Dr Lloyd Brooks Minor, an academic leader and scientist par excellence, is the current Carl and Elizabeth Naumann (twelfth) Dean of the Stanford University School of Medicine, a position that he took over from Dr Philip A Pizzo on December 1, 2012.1 Earlier, Dr Minor served as the Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs of Johns Hopkins University between 2009 and 2012. Before that, he served as the Andelot Professor and Director (Chair) of the Department of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and otolaryngologist-in-chief at the Johns Hopkins Hospital between 2003 and 2009, a significant milestone in his career that he accomplished within ten years of starting his journey in the same department as a young Assistant Professor.2

Born in Little Rock, Arkansas, Dr Minor completed his bachelor’s degree in Biology from Brown University in 1979 and his medical degree from Brown in 1982. He did his residency training in surgery at Duke University. At the University of Chicago, he completed his residency training in otolaryngology-head and neck surgery and also spent four years as research fellow in the lab of Dr Jay Goldberg. Dr Minor finished his training with a clinical fellowship with the Otology Group and EAR Foundation of Nashville in 1993. He soon joined Johns Hopkins University as a young faculty member in that same year.3,4

The list of his peer-reviewed publications not only establishes him as an astute academician but also a rational scientist and an expert in inner ear disorders. He has conducted rigorous experiments to establish path-breaking standards not only in the understanding of vestibulo-ocular reflex but also the management of Ménière’s Disease.5 He is best known for the discovery of Superior Canal Dehiscence Syndrome. He first identified the condition by meticulous observation and subsequently developed novel corrective surgical procedures.6-10

As Chair of the Department of Otolaryngology at Johns Hopkins, Dr Minor emphasized the importance of research and innovation. He was instrumental in significantly increasing research funding and clinical activity besides establishing modernistic standards in student teaching.4 His zeal for innovation and research was evident in his efforts as the Provost of Johns Hopkins University where he helped established the Gateway Sciences Initiative to support pedagogical innovation and a unique Doctor of Philosophy Board to take the PhD education to the next level.4,11 He invested considerable time and energy in recruiting an outstanding team of faculty and leaders at the University. He created a positive sense of team work and collaboration.

In his current position at Stanford Medicine, Dr Minor continues his innovative approach and believes that the goal of education is to train future leaders. He has already established state of the art models of cancer research and patient care delivery. With Dr Minor’s leadership, Stanford Medicine has established a strategic vision to lead the biomedical revolution in precision health. Empowering people to lead healthy lives, Precision Health is a fundamental shift to more proactive and personalized health care. Stanford Medicine is driving this transformation by leveraging the art and science of medicine to predict and prevent disease before it strikes and cure it decisively if it does.

Training in Leadership skills

Following his appointment as Chair at Johns Hopkins he took a course for new chairs provided by the institution, where he learned key lessons on team building and team management that he took very seriously and followed throughout his future endeavors. During this workshop, he also learned to make changes, break habits and see every day as a new challenge. He mastered the art of having difficult conversations and he believes that a department Chair is akin to a middle level manager who juggles between managing not only upwards but also downwards within the organization.

Dr Minor is generous in sharing credit for his career trajectory with his mentors and his supervisors. Dr Minor acknowledges the role of Bill Brody, John Etchemendy, and Ron Daniels, among others who were instrumental in helping him reach his current position. He fondly remembers his mentors at the University of Chicago and at the Otology Group and EAR Foundation who guided him and taught him to match surgical practice and delivery of care with visionary, futuristic ideas and an organized and methodological approach.

Books, learnings and other interests

Dr Minor is an avid reader. He reads both fiction and nonfiction as a part of a book club. He believes that books are great teachers and remembers the many lessons he has learned from his readings. He fondly recollects *The Inner Game of Management*, which deconstructs and discusses management failures.12 In this book, drawing on the experiences from managers in real organization, Flamholtz and Randle discuss concrete techniques for making the transition to new responsibilities. They offer critical insights into how and when an unsuccessful experience may become a pattern for failure or an opportunity for success. Successful leaders move to new roles and tend to apply conditioned practices to the new role with the belief that if these worked in the past, they should continue to operate. However, each organization is different and each position is distinct. Old wine in new bottle may not work and new policies may need to be designed and crafted.

Another important learning that Dr Minor shares is that many managers are poor at managing themselves and management is not a skill that can be readily compartmentalized. To manage an organization efficiently, it is imperative that individuals should learn to manage themselves first. One has to make an attempt to set their own house in order first, before they venture out to manage the world.

Besides reading, Dr Minor is fond of hiking and believes in keeping physically fit. He likes classical music and plays a musical instrument.

Self-assessment -Strengths and limitations

At Johns Hopkins, it was often a coffee-table joke to ask, “which is the widest street in the Baltimore?”. The answer, Wolfe Street, that separates the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and the Johns Hopkins Hospital, is often confusing, curious, hilarious, satirical and sarcastic at the same time. Dr Minor’s vision in which lies his strength was to bring not only these but also other scattered elements of the university closer, for coordinated, purposeful and effective team work.

He believes that the strength of many successful CEOs is their ability to recognize the key times to drive change in organizations. Further, when the time arrives, they have the ability to act rapidly and effectively to bring about this change. He shares an incident from his past when expensive encryption of university computers had to be undertaken to improve security. He established several channels of communication with key stakeholders and convinced them that the status quo was not tenable. Since he had laid down the foundation for change, acting effectively and rapidly became easier when the moment of transformation arrived. Another key attribute that helps leaders is their ability to learn from their failures and their mistakes. This ability has allowed Dr Minor to transform episodic failures to opportunities for future success.

On the role of charisma and vision in successful leadership, Dr Minor feels that it is important to be genuine, caring and authentic at the same time. He quotes the famous example of Lee Iacocca who turned around the fortunes of Chrysler in early 1980s with his charismatic, dazzling and inspiring leadership like a wartime general galvanizing his troops only to pave the way for a demise following his exit. He believes that charisma is often helpful when an organization is asked to perform beyond the normal or in a phase of transition and a leader with firm followers increases the chances of success. However, he feels that with deepening loyalty there is often a negative change in the behavior of the leader. A leader needs to be more inspired than inspiring and more diligent than dazzling. While charisma relates to individuals and not their roles, a leader needs to relate to people in real life. A leader should be a good listener and a good learner. Vision is another hyped word often brought up in the context of leadership. Dr Minor believes that vision is a dynamic process that keeps getting adjusted and refined. A leader who holds on too tightly to his or her vision often dies an untimely death along with the vision itself. Vision needs to develop in unison with the vision of the people.

**Challenges -** Managing conflict and providing critical feedback

The path of successful leaders is seldom free of conflict. When conflict arises, leaders should have the ability to comprehend that the disappointment people experience is directed at the role of the leader and not necessarily at the leader as an individual. Conflict and criticism should not affect an individual’s sense of self-worth, since this is not related to the role. Leaders who do not understand this automatically become defensive and irrational when faced with conflict.

Every leader in any position is confronted with difficult situations or communications when he or she may be required to give critical feedback to his team members. A leader performs more successfully at difficult conversations if he or she has had the opportunity to develop a relationship of trust with the employees and colleagues. When such an understanding exists between the two players participating in the conversation, the process of approaching complicated subjects becomes less stressful and more open. While handling difficult communications, Dr Minor maintains that a respectful treatment of the other person is essential and he does not allow the ‘person’ to come in conflict with the ‘role’. Further, he believes that access to resources allows a leader to put off difficult conversations which may not always be helpful.Lack of resources may force the hand of a manager to dive into difficult conversations before options or alternatives are fully considered. However, availability of resources may allow him to better negotiate through challenging exchanges at even during unfavorable phases. Leaders should not only be aware but keep themselves constantly updated on the availability of the resources at their disposal.

Every leader has to come to terms with the 80-20 rule of work sharing in organizations and this remains his biggest challenge. It is difficult to address and distribute assets of an institution according to the contributions of its constituents. The relation of an academic medical center to its parent university is always complex. A key approach that has helped him negotiate his way through difficult situations has been his desire to bring people together, which he believes is the fundamental function of a leader. A leader needs to build his team wisely and hold the members together as a functioning and performing unit. Dr Minor believes that at every given time point there will be a ‘pull’ keeping team members huddled together. At the same time, there will be a ‘push’ that throws people apart and away from each other. A successful leader should be able to keep the net force such that the pull is always greater than the push to allow the institution to function and grow, keeping people together.

When I asked him what are his plans from here and what will be his next stop from being the Dean at Stanford, Dr Minor has his feet firmly on the ground. He maintains that his job is not done yet and his only plan for the future is to do the current task at hand, to the best of his ability.

**Conclusions and impressions**

Dr Lloyd Brooks Minor comes across as a proactive leader who creates innovative opportunities for his carefully structured cohesive team to surge ahead. He thinks from the mind and work from the heart. He is dedicated to excellence and committed to innovation. He keeps an unflagging focus and composure, bringing each task to fruition, maintaining a humane, caring touch through the competitive journey.

A few striking takeaways from this brief and interesting conversation with Dr Minor translate into valuable tips for aspiring managers and leaders. While it is imperative to build your team carefully, painstakingly and wisely, it is important to connect to team members and build a relationship of trust with each individual to be able to successfully hold the team together for effective functioning. One should be able to act rapidly, forcefully and effectively at the right time point in critical situations. One should learn from inevitable failures and apply the learnings from each mistake to transform another opportunity into a success. Meticulous research leads the path for innovation which is integral to staying ahead of the field. A good leader is constantly updated on his resources and marshals them judiciously. Finally, it’s important to keep your feet on the ground and be generous to attribute credit to individuals who have been either instrumental in shaping your destiny or are working hard to keep you there.

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**Unstructured Abstract**

Dr Lloyd Brooks Minor, is the current Carl and Elizabeth Naumann (twelfth) Dean of the Stanford University School of Medicine. This article presents a brief bio sketch of his journey, followed by a conversation with him on his style of leadership, ethical issues involved while taking decisions in leadership positions and conveys a message to aspiring leaders in the field of Medicine and Public Health. The conversation centers around the training and development of leadership skills, managing conflict and other difficult situations ethically, his interests and readings. It includes an assessment of strengths and limitations in leadership styles besides thoughts on challenges faced by individuals in leadership positions.