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## From the Editor's Desk

### PRIMUM NON NOCERE — TO YOURSELF

Hurry up, hurry up, hurry up, hurry up  
Can't waste time, can't waste time, can't waste  
time, can't waste time  
When you're racing with the clock  
When you're racing with the clock  
And the second hand doesn't understand  
That your back may break and your fingers ache  
And your constitution isn't made of rock  
It's a losing race when you're racing with the  
Racing racing racing with the clock

The Pajama Game  
Richard Adler and Jerry Ross, 1954

Australia-wide, doctors are returning to work after a break, perhaps even to circumstances similar to those so poignantly captured above: changing schedules to better meet the incessant demands of patients, reams of paperwork, escalating red tape and endless requests to serve on this or that committee. Indeed, their lives are subsumed by service to others before self.

"No worries", many say, "we are task-oriented, compulsive and perfectionists. We can cope".


But take time out to answer either yes or no to the following questions\*:

1. Are you highly achievement-oriented?
2. Do you tend to withdraw from offers of support?
3. Do you have difficulty delegating responsibilities to others, including patients?
4. Do you prefer to work alone?
5. Do you avoid discussing problems with others?
6. Do you externalise blame?
7. Are your work relationships asymmetrical? (ie, are you always giving?)
8. Is your personal identity bound up with your work role or professional identity?
9. Do you often overload yourself — have a difficult time saying no?
10. Is there a lack of opportunities for positive and timely feedback outside your professional or work role?
11. Do you abide by the laws "don't talk, don't trust, don't feel"?

The more "yes" responses, the greater your risk of professional burnout.

The solution?

*Primum non nocere* — to yourself.



Martin B Van Der Weyden

\* Center for Professional Well-Being, Durham, North Carolina, USA.

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