Learning for a Lifetime

BY ELLEN B. LIPMAN, M.S. R.T.(R)(MR), CAE

MY GOSH, I DID IT! I passed. No more studying, no more tests, no more having to learn new things. I’m done. Finished. Well, at least until I get my first job.

I gradually realized that I’m not done learning … I will never be done learning and it’s actually OK not to be “done.” Learning doesn’t end when you get that certificate or diploma — it’s a lifetime job.

Medicine is changing at such a rapid pace it makes our heads spin. Patients want to know you care, but even more importantly, they want to be assured you know what you’re doing. And because they’ve researched everything about their imaging exam before they arrive at the radiology department, you’d better be on your toes.

How can R.T.s keep on top of their jobs, technological innovations and the latest medical research, while staying up with the whirlwind of personal lives? The answer is two simple words: lifelong learning.

Today, lifelong learning is a critical requirement for every professional. Here are a few ways to keep growing:

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES. Are you taking advantage of every opportunity to learn something new? Learning can be formal, such as attending in-services, or informal, such as asking a coworker for advice. Adults learn best when it’s relevant to their work or when they can apply it immediately, building on existing knowledge and experience.

LEARNING FROM PEERS. Do you take advantage of your coworkers? Studies have shown peer-to-peer interaction and learning are the most effective means of continuing education. We also need feedback. Do you react to feedback as criticism and disapproval or as tips, pointers and advice? Do you give the type of feedback you’d like to receive?

LEARNING RESOURCES. Do you read about new techniques or methods? Do you explore ways basic tasks can be performed more efficiently? Use the talents of various experts at your facility; you honor colleagues when you ask them to share their expertise.

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT. What is your departmental culture for learning? As adult learners, we learn best in a safe, trustworthy environment. When you show a desire and excitement for learning, you become a model for fellow R.T.s. For example, you could coordinate a refresher lesson on a particular procedure.

Remaining stagnant is not an option. How and what you learn are limited only by your vision and creativity. And like me, you’ll probably be OK never being done.😊

ELLEN B. LIPMAN, M.S., R.T.(R)(MR), CAE, is ASRT director of professional development.