

Leverage

By Steve Mason, Ph.D.

Someone once told me a story about a wealthy man who felt an intense need to help the poor. His solution was to spend a significant period of time serving the poor in India. However, it was a terrible struggle for him, and he never really 'hit his stride'. One day, someone came up behind him and asked "What are you doing?" He turned around and saw Mother Teresa. "I'm serving the poor," he said. "Well, you're terrible at it," she replied, and then told him to find another way to help the people he was trying to serve.

While I don't know every little detail behind that particular anecdote, there is a very applicable lesson for any of us who want to help those who desperately need it. Once we perceive the great need around us, be it sex trafficking, labor trafficking, homelessness, or healthcare disparity, it's very easy to jump at the first idea or opportunity to do something. The problem is that we then run the risk of not leveraging our gifts, talents, and resources wisely.

I've experienced this in my own life. I used to spend a significant amount of time studying and ap-

“ At *Cancer InCytes*, we are certainly not immune to the temptation to do something simply for the sake of trying to reach an end goal. We hate social injustice with an intense passion, and will fight against it tirelessly. However, we, like any other organization, must recognize our appropriate place in the larger solution. ”

plying rational and theological arguments in an effort to convince people of my point of view. It seemed like a logical connection to me – I have an advanced degree, and I'm passionate about convincing others of my views, particularly in areas that could lead to relieving the suffering of others. However, I eventually realized that (1) I'm not very good at logical arguments, and (2) I'm much better at writing and communicating, educating others, and serving in more hands-on ways.

The non-profit realm is flooded with well-intentioned people doing everything they can to meet a dire need. The challenge is that sometimes many are not applying their talents and resources in the most effective way, and instead are just doing something because - rightly so - something needs to be done. However, in many cases, it may be beneficial to reassess whether there may be a better approach. As an example, in the anti-trafficking arena, there are a lot of organizations dedicated to raising awareness around the plight of the victims. This is great, and we at *Cancer InCytes* hope to

add our voices. However, the challenge is shifting, and raising awareness to the general public is no longer the biggest need – major media outlets have now picked up the issue and can drive awareness forward much more effectively than any grassroots group acting alone. One new challenge is for groups to continue to raise awareness, but in a more targeted way to identify the right areas or target populations to focus awareness efforts in, and who to partner with in doing so.

Other next steps include improvements in identifying, freeing, and caring for the victims, and doing so in such a way to ensure holistic recovery for the victims. Addressing the issue of demand must also continue to be explored. However, the risk will be for organizations to now do whatever they can in this arena without first assessing their talents, resources, and suitability for such a monumental challenge. Again, instead this may be a good place for assessing the value of partnerships and targeting specific programs or demographics.

Letter From the Editor

At *Cancer InCytes*, we are certainly not immune to the temptation to do something simply for the sake of trying to reach an end goal. We hate social injustice with an intense passion, and will fight against it tirelessly. However, we, like any other organization, must recognize our appropriate place in the larger solution. For example, we are not the organization to build a safe home or a clinic or to produce a documentary. Instead, we want to partner with the organizations that are doing these things to support them in their efforts, to share their key learnings with other organizations, and to drive forward the discussion around what the next steps must be. We want to help bring the most pertinent information to those who need it most in order to facilitate the greatest possible steps forward. And most importantly, we want to drive dis-

ussion around what must be done from a healthcare perspective to bring an end to social injustice around the world. Will you help us leverage ourselves effectively so that we can help others make best use of their own resources? Contact us at <http://www.cancerincytes.org/#!contact/cudb>.

Sincerely,



Steve Mason, Ph.D.
Senior Editor of Biological Sciences

