

For those of you looking for the “executive summary”: since the fall we have had one in Law School (Alex), one in Medical School (Caite), one in college (Bekah), one in high school (Gillian), one in middle school (Nate) and one in preschool (Zac).... we are very proud, very tired and in serious debt. Bruce knows that he married well and has a beautiful family; however, they also possess an impressive amount of talent, decency, compassion, intelligence, an incredible ability to foster and maintain lifelong friendships, and a terrific sense of humor (and timing – one that even understands a rubber chicken joke). We had a wonderful trip Kansas City for the All-Star game festivities (courtesy of our friends Jeff and Ilene) and had innumerable memorable experiences not the least of which was an amazing trip to the new Perot Science Museum (you should not miss it when you come to Dallas) and the spectacular Chihuly glass exhibit at the Arboretum – truly a once in a lifetime opportunity.

As noted before, our family is very into food. Even the kids (all except Nate – who still loves the artificial orange of Kraft Mac-n-Cheese and french fries). We're not foodies in the sense that we obsess over local ingredients or seek out obscure delicacies. Rather, we just really like the experience of ordering it, consuming it, and telling others about it. Before family vacations, we exchange emails with links to restaurant websites and discuss which dishes sound like winners. Not only are multicourse meals booked well in advance, but dessert, snacks and anticipation are placed on our itinerary as well. For the perfect vacation, I want to lie by the ocean (in the shade), then go eat some food, then go read a book by the ocean, then go eat some more food. Christie is totally into the food part, but cannot stand the lying around – thus our conflict – we “compromise” by her extensively planning all the stuff we will do and me going and doing it (albeit with some complaining) and she generally finds one day for me to lie around (while she does something else). We are always looking for great dining experiences. This year provided quite a few in lots of locations, so let us know if you are looking for a restaurant (even in Hawaii).

Neil Armstrong's passing really touched us, especially coinciding as it did with this election. Why? Because the America that launched Armstrong was an America that was embarked on a great and inspiring journey – one that spawned breakthroughs in science, medicine, computing and physics that made our country, and the world, a better place. What journey are we on today? Balancing the budget? Expanding health insurance? The election was largely about how to shift a tiny sliver of swing-state voters from one camp to the other, but no one is trying to elevate us, by taking us all, as a nation, on a daring new journey. What goals could merit such a journey? Now that we have put a man on the Moon and a car on Mars, let's commit to keeping everyone in school. Let's commit that, within a decade, every American will have the tools for, and financial access to, some kind of postsecondary education – whether it is vocational school, community college or a four-year university. Because without some higher education that makes you “work ready” for one of today's good jobs and a lifelong-learner for one of tomorrow's, it's almost impossible to secure a decent job or realize your full potential. Or, let's make America for the world what Cape Canaveral was to America – the world's greatest launching pad for innovation and new companies. Let's commit that, in the next decade, we'll create the dynamics to double the number of new companies started in America each year – from 500,000 to 1 million. That means combining immigration reform, new investments in research to push out the boundaries of science, vastly increasing the speed of our Internet, rebuilding our infrastructure and reforming the tax code. Whatever it costs, we will make it back times 10.

The recent tragedy at Newtown has received a lot of media coverage, but one thing about that coverage has been offensive: the suggestion that Asperger's might be a clue to why this happened. Autism and Asperger's are developmental disorders, not mental illnesses; and there is no connection between them and violent behavior. Children with autism may have trouble understanding the motivations and nonverbal cues of others, be socially naïve and have difficulty expressing their emotions in words, but they are typically more truthful and less manipulative than neurotypical children and are often people of great integrity. They can also have a strong desire to connect with others and they can be intensely empathetic – they just attempt those connections and express that empathy in unconventional ways. It is simply untrue to suggest that they are more likely to become killers. This is not about autism, It's about mental illness and guns to which those with mental illness

should not have access. I do not have a brilliant solution to the gun violence in this country, the violence that can allow an unstable man to murder 20 children with between three and 11 shots apiece from a semi-automatic weapon firing terroristic hollow-point bullets designed to inflict the most damage possible. But smarter people than I must have ideas about what to do, while protecting the right of law-abiding Americans to bear arms. We have to stop cowering to those opposed to meaningful gun reform, who blindly and obediently say, "Guns don't kill; people kill." That's a nice slogan. It's also ridiculously and cruelly blind to the events of recent months in America, where a movie theater, a shopping mall and idyllic New England elementary school have been shot up by sick people -- and, in the case of the Newton shootings, a sick person with access to the kinds of guns used in war zones. Having said that, it is obvious that we have to address the mental health aspect of this issue and to care better for those on society's fringes... Your move, President Obama, and leaders of the House and Senate, on both sides of the aisle. Be leaders. Do the right thing. Do something.

Lance Armstrong got revealed this year as a cheat. I was pretty sad – like many others I watched and admired his feats on the bicycle (even riding my stationary bike while watching him ride the mountain stages), wore a LiveStrong bracelet to honor my wife and aunt who beat cancer (like Lance) and helped him raise 100's of millions of dollars to fight cancer. Unfortunately Lance the Man turns out to be petty, bitter and vindictive. In Armstrong's case, they *are* connected. If he does not cheat, he presumably does not dominate the Tour de France; if he does not dominate the Tour de France, his own personal recovery from testicular cancer is less inspiring; if his story isn't as inspiring, he does not become a celebrity; if he's not a celebrity, LiveStrong's ability to help people would be muted. Armstrong helped the lives of many cancer victims by being the most talented cheater within a sport where cheating was/is rampant. Now, does that positive conclusion "offset" the unethical exploits that allowed it to occur? Somehow it seems that everything ought to matter.

We love baseball for lots of reasons. We were reminded of one this year when 35,000 fans in Fenway Park demanded an opportunity to say their goodbye to Kevin Youkilis, who likewise treated this curtain call as a farewell. People sometimes criticize baseball movies for sentimentality, but I think such films are trying to re-create something entirely real about the game. Baseball is unmatched for its ability to produce honest moments of mass collective sentimentality. I'll remember this one, and I'm glad I was able to experience it live (from home courtesy of MLB TV)). Youkilis got traded from the Sox (to the other Sox) the next day. He is a hero to anybody who does not "look like an athlete". With a swing that seemed composed of seven separate moving parts that makes every little league coach cringe, Youkilis did not resemble anyone's ideal of a ballplayer. He was noticeable - completely bald with the thick shock of his red goatee, with that odd batting style, with the way his finger danced on the bat that dangled over his head. He was at the heart of two World Series championships in a city and region of people who wondered for decades if they would live to see one. He was edgy and irritating and a force of will who inspired loyalty in teammates and rage in opponents; he was as loved by hometown fans as he was despised on the road. He dedicated a lot of his time to helping kids and he quietly held to his faith (he is a Jew – one of the few we can point to in professional sports writ large) and he played hard even as his body deteriorated. He did not like making outs. This is the beautiful thing about Youk. He made a mission of fighting off pitches, fouling off pitches, laying off pitches; every at-bat was a fight, as he graphically displayed every time he made an out. We will miss watching him (as he signed with the Yankees). On a positive note, after over a decade on the waiting list, we got season tickets to Red Sox Spring Training and got to see a number of games from great seats. Unfortunately, all that promise turned to dust as a truly miserable season for the Sox came to an ignominious end with an 8th straight loss in early October. You can talk about crappy leadership, bad team chemistry, disputes with players, strained relationships with media, or anything else but the bottom line is the Red Sox pitched horrifically, and their best players either regressed sharply from last season, got hurt, or both. Beckett, Lester, Cook and Matsuzaka were awful (at least Lackey did not pitch); The bullpen was Chernobyl-esque; Youk looked washed up, Pedroia played through hand injuries all year, Ortiz got hurt, Gonzalez failed to live up to expectations, shortstop remained a black hole (the curse of Nomar?) and Jacoby Ellsbury went from MVP candidate to scrub. Hope springs eternal with the trade that sent ~\$250M of salary to the Dodgers and real fans

remain loyal, but this was a bad team that looks like it needs a long rebuild. Fans before the last decade of success remember what this feels like.

My favorite journal article (published in the British Medical Journal) this year involved walking speed and death rates. It turns out that the Grim Reaper's preferred walking speed is 0.82 m/s (~2 miles per hour) under "working" conditions. None of the men in the study with walking speeds of 1.36 m/s (3 miles per hour) or greater died, so this seems to be the Grim Reaper's most likely maximum speed; Thus, for those wishing to avoid fate, this would be the advised minimum speed to stay ahead of the grim reaper. The author's note also said that "the preferred walking speed of the Grim Reaper while collecting souls is relatively constant irrespective of people's geographical location, sex, or ethnic background." So keep walking at an appropriate pace!

On that note, let's talk about family:

ALEX

It has been a long year in Law School for Alex. To us, it is pretty impressive that he is wading through the volume of reading and writing that is absolutely required, and we can see what he has learned (although sometimes it is a pretty foreign language to us). Having said that, it is crazy expensive in terms of tuition and pretty clearly, the Law schools care about their graduation rates and their immediate job rates, but do not really care about the actual students in any substantive way. Plus, who knew that the job market for attorneys would be so lousy? His original goal of working for the government seems pretty tough since the federal, state and local governments all have no legal jobs and are cutting back. The large firms are all letting people go and not offering internships. It looks like a niche or some dual kind of expertise is the way to get into the field. We shall see... We did get to see him this summer, as Alex had not one, but two summer law internships (at King and Spalding in Houston and at Texas Scottish Rite Hospital in Dallas) so we got to see him for about 6 weeks total outside of a few days around holiday times – the real world is definitely intruding on our family time. He does seem to enjoy some aspects of living in Cleveland – the food is remarkably good and there are a lot more cultural activities than you would think. The tougher parts are the long grey winter and the volume of studying necessary. Healthwise, Alex had a kidney stone that knocked him back for a little while in late August - we flew him back to Dallas for care and had a few difficult days in and out of the hospital until it resolved just as school resumed. Sadly he is continuing a three generation inheritance of kidney stones. He has really grown having to be on his own so much. It has been hard on him being so far from the family support, but thanks to texting and facetime we can constantly remind him how proud we are of our very mature son.

CAITE

After a long (and emotionally wearying) application and interview process, Caite was admitted to UT Southwestern in May. Bruce gets no credit as the process is rigidly controlled – she did it on her own! As of right now, she loves Medical School and is really energized, but working so much harder than she anticipated (although we told her as much). Much of the curriculum is the same as when Christie went here, it is just that the volume of material and knowledge is exponentially larger. We said 'goodbye' to Mike in the late Spring as he returned to Massachusetts to go to UMass Medical School (although Caite has visited twice). She got her own apartment about 10 minutes from school and is remarkably independent (perhaps not so remarkable) even though we get to see her regularly for dinner. Fortunately, the 14 year-old Ford explorer is still functioning well enough to make that commute. Bruce really loves that she often comes to the office and he gets to eat lunch with her about once a week. She has made some friends and genuinely seemed to enjoy her anatomy labs (and she still loves genetics). She has done some shadowing of clinicians and really loves patient care (and has not ruled out Ob-Gyn despite the dinner table conversation for the past 20+ years). She still professionally shops and loves her boots, but is coming to appreciate the lack of winter in Dallas. It is really nice having her around to help Gillian with physics (she has become a tutor for other kids as well) and to see Nate and Zac regularly (She has cultivated a magical ability to get Zac to take a nap). Caite's start to Medical School has brought back lots of memories and an understanding of how much has changed (all the lectures and notes are online and no one really uses the physical library anymore

except as a quiet place). She has noted with dismay the lack of holidays, spring and winter break time and the shortened summer – welcome to the real world...

She is learning that Medicine is different than almost any other profession: the rigor and duration of training (7-13 years depending), expectations of perfection, and the trust conferred is perhaps unmatched by any other occupational group. But like her peers, she is not delusional about the future. Physicians expect to practice in larger settings, anticipate that future compensation will shrink, and understand that we will provide services through team-based models that leverage information technologies and engage consumers directly. That's the new normal. It is gratifying to see how much she has matured in her thinking and her approach to life and career.

BEKAH

Bekah is happy and busy at school in DC – she is a junior and on track to graduate after four years. It looks like she will wind up either going to grad school in some kind of dramaturgy/theatre production/direction/teaching capacity, or may strike out and try acting as a career, but we shall see. She is firmly her own woman, now running a theatre company as the functional CEO. She clearly has a pretty firm hand on everything that the “14th Grade Players” have going on and will be directing a production of *Macbeth* in the spring. It is gratifying to see that she is completely comfortable getting around on the metro and occasional ‘zip car’ rental, so she does not need a car of her own. Sadly we did not get to see much of Bekah over the summer as she stayed in Washington to work; but she got her taste of the “real world” with a clerical job (not much fun according to her) and a weak director and disinterested producer of the show she stage managed. Bekah was stage manager for an original Capital Fringe play in DC over the summer, so for the first time in nine years, she did not go to Camp Shakespeare at Winedale. Gillian definitely missed her, and she missed the camaraderie and sweat equity of the plays (but perhaps not the heat of the Winedale Barn). She is still a ‘ray of sunshine’ and manages an incredibly positive attitude no matter what the challenge. She and we all are justifiably proud of her 3.9 GPA at GWU and still laugh about the undefeated football team, they don't have one to defeat! We try to call, text, facetime and skype as much as we can (and you know that Christie makes sure that all the ‘big kids’ are in touch with her in some fashion every day), but we are all busy and we definitely do not get to see her (or Alex) as much as we would like. One of her great family stories this year was as follows: Rebekah is babysitting Zac. He comes up to her having obviously pooped in his pampers, pats his butt and says “you do”. She replies “no, I do not!” Zac makes a face and says “mom-mom?”, Bekah says “yes!” we are still working on ensuring that each of our kids has the vital life skill of changing a poopy diaper. So far we have only succeeded with Caite.

GILLIAN

Gillian joined JETS (no, not the hated New York team, but Junior Engineering and Technology Society) and loved it, at least as best we can tell – communications with a 15 year-old are never perfectly clear. They spent innumerable hours after school designing and building their competition robot and Gillian became the first freshman driver of the robot in 6 years. The team finished 2nd at regionals and qualified for state finals, finishing in the top third. Gillian is pretty a typical teen, so only episodically pleasant to be around – we just endure until the happy kid returns.... She is working ridiculously hard at school, between the academics (she is in multiple advanced classes including physics – making an A+ so far, she really has a gift) and is perpetually exhausted, catching up on sleep with 14 hours a day on weekends. Gillian won the school-wide persuasive speaking contest (again - only girl in the school to do so in both contests held every other year - for those of you who remember, she won in 7th grade) with a talk on Wikipedia. She appears to be taking the trophy as the most difficult of all of our children to awaken in the morning (no small feat, considering the serious competition from Alex). We have tried assorted variations on alarms, including the one that produces a siren while rolling across the floor without any real success. She just gets up shuts it off and goes back to sleep. We have to be especially careful, as she can get out of bed and answer questions, claiming to be awake and yet will be curled up under the covers two minutes later! Christie bears the brunt of this as does Nate, and Zac is always late for pre-school). We are hopeful (sort of) that she will get her driver's license this summer and thus be able to drive herself to school (which is the thing that solved Caite's awakening issues). However, that will mean swapping

Alex's Honda Pilot for her use and getting Alex a 'new' car (guess who is rooting hardest for Gillian to pass the drivers test?). Gillian had a pretty relaxed summer (Camp Shakespeare and a lot of reading) but it is likely the last one as next summer brings the start of college investigation trips and her Mother's list of schools (which Christie has had ready since Gillian was about 9). She is still hoping to go to Camp Shakespeare as this will be her last eligible year. This past summer, Gillian was really radiant as Hero in *Much Ado About Nothing* – a hard role since she is onstage almost all the time but with fewer lines so she has to really pay attention and react. It was really neat to see her step into a leading role (and she was really excited to finally wear a dress after five years at camp – she was just a little tired of “pumpkin pants and tights”). She had a great experience and it was once again amazing to see what middle school kids can do with Shakespeare! We had a great time watching the Olympics this summer while texting all our kids. We learned of Gillian's obsession with Olympic gymnastics and loved her response to hearing that the opening ceremony involved James Bond, Mary Poppins and Voldemort – "this pleases me ". Astoundingly, our daughter created the twitter account for Danell Leyva's lucky towel (he is the leader of the US men's team). At one point, it had 13,000 followers including Leyva himself– yes, the towel account had 13,000 followers (with Gillian being the one behind the curtain tweeting regularly) and was cited by the gymnastics commentators, USA Today, the Today Show on NBC and the Huffington Post. You can google it! She is turning into someone pretty remarkable (just like her siblings).

NATE

This year, Nate announced that his career aspiration is to be a mad scientist and then he then gave his version of an evil laugh... of course he has also talked about being a computer scientist, a Lego engineer and a bug collector. Nate is finally having a terrific year. He enrolled in a new School (the Winston School which is mercifully about 2 miles from home) and his parents were pretty nervous about the transition – Nate was not. Fortunately, he is doing extremely well at school, making friends, adapting to the more rigorous academic environment (making straight “A's”) and participating in afterschool activities. We hope that this continues for years to come. Meanwhile, puberty has snuck up on him/us and we are now challenged with the usual personal grooming tasks and persuading him to take regular showers. He has Bekah's thick hair that grows at what seems like an inch a week, but his version sticks up at every angle and seemingly refuses to be tamed. It is beautiful hair, it just seems to have a mind of its own (perhaps we need to get Bekah to teach Nate how to care for it). He still loves his video games (especially World of Warcraft in its various versions) and after Hanukkah, he now has a full slate of electronica (Nintendo DS, iPad, and MacBook), but no phone...yet. This summer, Nate braved the long solo travel to Canada for sleep-away camp and seemed to actually enjoy it. He has finally learned to do some chores (and I do mean a few, with prompting and only when it is truly absolutely necessary) and so his room is occasionally cleaner/neater. He is definitely growing and he no longer seems like a little boy but is clearly moving into adolescence (his feet and hands are huge). His sense of humor is coming out more often and he participates in the family games of giving each other a hard time. His eating habits have very slightly broadened including oatmeal (!), but he remains devoted to turkey hot dogs (eating the insides but not the skins), artificially orange kraft mac-n-cheese and chips. We are working on getting him a better physical activity plan, but he remains pretty skinny. He adores his little brother and is a pretty happy kid.

ISAAC

Zac is, by far, the most physically active child we have had. He runs everywhere, always has to be in front of everything, jumps from heights that sometimes frighten us (but not him) and intensely curious about new “stuff”. He loves the dogs (even Fenway, who tries everything he can to avoid Zac's affections), having ridden both Phoebe and Daisy like a pony – they love giving him wet kisses so that he smells like dog all evening (ugh). He remains a physically beautiful child (even though he is clearly the child most likely to break a bone). His smile lights up the room. This year, everyone got new names from Zac: “Alesh”, “T”, “Boo”, “Gee”, “Nay” and “Mom-Mom” and “Daaa”- although he can clearly say ‘Grandad’ and ‘Pop-eye’. Lots of changes in his life as Caite moved to her own apartment (even though she still comes by regularly to get home cooking), so his regular hair grabbing subject is only intermittently available. He started pre-school at a local orthodox Temple, where he seems to be

the leader of the class. He babbles incessantly, but was hard to understand, so he got evaluated and started speech therapy (his receptive language was at the 85th percentile but his expressive language was at the 5th – most likely because he has a whole cadre of folks catering to his every need, so why bother to talk?). The year ended with a trip to the ER for stitches when he opened a moderate size cut in his eyebrow after launching himself into the bedframe just before Christmas – head wounds do bleed prolifically. He now has more ED visits than any of our other children and does not turn three until February – sadly, given his adventurous personality, we are likely to get “frequent flier” miles in the ED... We continue to struggle with his sleeping habits – he really does not enjoy sleeping, nor does he adhere to standard hours – he can spontaneously awaken at any hour of the night, loves staying up until 11:00PM, only naps for 90 min late in the afternoon, and hates, hates, hates sleeping alone. He is deft at the “H” position with feet in daddy’s ribs and head stuck to Mom, and he also likes the “wrap around your head” (in this case, Christie’s head) and is most soothed by holding onto long blond hair and sucking his thumb (this kind of leaves Bruce and Alex out of the soothing equation). He knows more about the iPad and games on the iPhone than either of his parents (scary) and we try to limit his television exposure to “Little Einsteins”, “Barney” and “Sesame Street”, but we are being slowly driven insane by the various theme songs which we hear in our sleep and often have to sing with him. He is remarkably musical, loving to hit notes on the piano and play the drums (no, no noooo). We know that we have an awkwardly played violin in our future.

CHRISTIE

Christie remains the glue that holds us all together. She can be a little obsessive at times, but it is almost always in a good cause. With three kids to drop off and pick up each day, we are back to putting giant mileage on her car (she still missed the Suburban and I am sure that when next time comes, we will wind up getting that or an Escalade – she loves the giant vehicle regardless of mileage). Keeping track of all of us, much less the care and feeding thereof is a full time job. Occasionally, I think that she misses the relative calm of being a practicing clinician.... She continues to hone her skills as a chef – so much so that sometimes to Bruce’s dismay, things that he loves fall off the menu to make room for new and interesting culinary creations! Aside from the extravaganza that is Hanukkah (and Christmas), she spent a lot of time looking into her family heritage as a gift for her folks (we are truly blessed to have them in our lives – Beverly still playing ranked tennis at age 84 and Wayne still the sewer and water commissioner of Belton, MO at age 80 – Bruce’s folks are also doing well in their 80’s, having moved to a condo in an assisted living facility in San Antonio). Christie’s family can trace its roots back to the Mayflower – so we are looking into our girls’ eligibility to join the “Daughters of the American Revolution”!... it has reminded me that I am the first person in my family to be born in the United States. The difference in our childhood and that of our kids is pretty profound in some ways – the internet and startling communication devices like the computers and phones that we take for granted; but in many ways, they are much the same – love of family and country, realization that we live in a remarkable time (democracy may be exasperating, difficult and messy, but it beats any other system of government available) and despite anecdote to the contrary, hard work and intelligence are still ultimately rewarded.

BRUCE

Bruce continues in his role as Executive Vice-President for Health System Affairs at UT Southwestern. Under his leadership, it has been a good year for both the faculty practice and the university hospitals in terms of quality, patient outcomes and safety, and patient satisfaction as well as financials. The contracts and relationships with Parkland Hospital and Children’s Medical Center (the adult indigent care and free-standing pediatric hospital where our faculty provide the care) continue to grow more complex – and likely even more so in the future as they way that we pay for and provide health care changes rapidly over the next 5-7 years. He misses regular clinical work, where there is immediate gratification in directly doing something for someone (and the thrill of delivering a baby is still there), but still believes that he can make a difference for more people as an administrator than as a clinician.

“Data is not information. Information is not knowledge. And knowledge is certainly not wisdom.” Technology has radically changed our lives over the last decade. Just think about the following: In 2002, almost no one outside of their work had an email and we worked with dial-up

modem, which was glitchy at best and downloaded at glacial speeds. By 2003, everyone had personal email; by 2005 everyone knew how to navigate the web, forward URLs and by 2007 most people knew how to anonymously slander people on message boards; people weren't terrified that their credit card would be stolen if they made an online purchase; modem speeds went to gigabytes and web designs didn't feel like they were trapped in the 1950s anymore; by then the blogosphere slowly rounded into form; and life-altering things like "wireless" and "streaming video" were being perfected (and even better, everyone knew they were coming). The following things were created: MySpace (2003); Facebook (2004); Gmail (2004); sports blogs (2004); YouTube (2005); podcasts (2005); Twitter (2006); iPhones (2007). By 2009, all of those mediums and devices had become a routine part of everyday life (with the exception of MySpace — which only survives in *To Catch a Predator* reruns). I remember as a fellow when there was a VIP who came in to L&D in preterm labor and I was supposed to personally manage them and I was at dinner at a Chinese restaurant, half a mile from the hospital and another half mile from my apartment, I was effectively invisible to the hospital staff. And when they finally tracked me down later that night on my home phone, I simply apologized for being ... *out of touch*. No one has said the phrase *out of touch* for at least a decade. There is an entire generation of young people out there who don't even know that those three words can be used in combination. This is on par with that long-lost moment in, like, the 17th century when if you said to your teacher, "The dog ate my homework," there was a reasonable chance that the dog actually had eaten your homework. Before 2003, adults knew more and possessed more of this technology than kids. Over the next few years that reversed. Today we all ask our kids to fix the computer or tell us which app to use or how to make Netflix work right. Cell phones are ubiquitous and are becoming the device that manages our life (and may soon manage our healthcare). No one even uses a fax machine (formerly the height of technology) and we watch shows from whatever media (television, film, YouTube, etc.) on our own individual schedule. Used to be that if you wanted to watch a TV show, you watched it at the same time as everyone else — which meant that TV had the same sense of cultural immediacy that today only live sporting events have (which is part of what we love about sports — it is highly resistant to DVR). It is a complete revolution — just one that happened without any violence.

We cannot end without talking about Healthcare in the United States... Health care is complicated (duh). Because most consumers pay less than 20% of the costs for their care, the total costs for the products and services we use are unknown. Because we tend to believe whatever a physician suggests without studying treatment options independently, we tend to assume all care is necessary care. Because there are no repercussions of unhealthy lifestyles and non-adherence to recommended treatments, we are not inclined to think our behavior impacts costs. And because we think in terms of our own anecdotal experiences with the doctors, nurses, hospitals, and the insurance plans we use, ours is a uniquely personal view of system performance that's circumstantial rather than studied. As a result, "quality" is about bedside manner and paperwork hassles more so than accuracy of diagnosis and appropriateness of treatments. And costs and prices are unrelated: what's charged for a service varies not based on actual costs but on who's paying. For the past 15 years, American Healthcare has been placed under a microscope. While there are islands of striking success, even miracles, the overall picture is not as pretty as we would hope: there are too many mistakes, variations are the norm, access is spotty, seamless coordination between providers is rare, patient-centeredness is unusual, and costs are unsustainable. Against that backdrop, every regulator, accreditor, payer, and legislator is feeling pressure to do his or her part to make the system better. These pressures have fueled myriad initiatives — transparency, pay for performance, no pay for errors, more robust accreditation standards, readmission penalties, meaningful use payments, and the Affordable Care Act (ACA) — to promote value and health, give more people insurance and bend the cost curve.

While the early action centered on hospitals, it is now turning to doctors. After all, since doctors' decisions determine most of what is done for patients, viewing quality, safety, and efficiency through a physician lens seems appropriate. Moreover, most healthcare is actually delivered outside of the hospital setting. But while measuring the quality of hospital care is hard, measuring individual physicians' quality of care is that much harder. On top of the usual problems of case-mix adjustment (if it is not done — or not done well — it's easy to unfairly penalize a great doctor who attracts sick

patients), there are other daunting statistical and attribution issues. For example, while it is statistically feasible to determine the better of two hospitals for heart failure if they've each cared for a few hundred patients, it's next-to-impossible to differentiate between two doctors who each cared for 20 patients. Moreover, when a team of doctors manages a patient, which one should be credited, or blamed, for the outcomes? These are tough nuts to crack. Perhaps an even larger issue is that all of today's quality and safety measures assume that the physician has made the correct diagnosis and that the procedure was actually needed. A world of statistical assessments inexorably undervalues diagnostic acumen and appropriate use of technology: the ability to take a good history, formulate the right differential diagnosis, order the correct tests and consultations, and interpret all of the data correctly. What is measured matters, and without measures of physicians' knowledge, analytical skills, and judgment, patients won't be able to assess these things when choosing a doctor, and training programs will gradually deemphasize these competencies in their curricula.

Having said that, the biggest issue we are facing is the cost of care. At 17.6% of the U.S. gross domestic product (GDP), 25% of the federal budget, 23% of the average state budget, and 19% of household discretionary spending, it's the elephant in the room. The big question in health reform is this: is our system performing at a level that's commensurate with the value it adds in communities, companies, and households, and if not, how can the value gap be bridged? The ACA includes a complicated set of demonstrations and pilots that "might" bend the curve—avoidable readmission penalties to hospitals, limitations on physician self-referrals and private inurement, increased transparency to equip consumers to understand treatment options and underlying evidence, and others. It is a myth that Government health care programs—Medicare and Medicaid—are poorly managed and need overhaul. The administrative costs of these programs are less than the administrative costs paid by employers for commercial coverage: 5.5% versus 7%, respectively. That said, the costs of these programs are soaring due to increased enrollments and rising costs for the health services they use. Their overhaul is necessary because the costs are not sustainable due not to the ineptitude of administrators but the realities of demand and medical inflation. Fixing health care is necessary, but it's about how we reduce costs associated with unhealthy lifestyles and unhealthy environments. It's about changing medical education to equip caregivers with technologies or skills to coach consumers rather than parent them. It's about implementing incentives that reward behaviors around good health outcomes, while eliminating fraud and waste aggressively. And it's about constructing a coordinated health system in the world's strongest economy that leverages modern technologies, embraces transparency and accountability, and rewards operational efficiencies resulting in greatly improved value.

Finally, political debate is a wonderful thing; but partisan shrieking is corrosive and destructive. If we are to find solutions to the challenges we face, we have to re-learn the virtues of compromise. If we are going to deal intelligently with the problems we confront, we need time to pause, to consider and reflect. But our media, news and social, are intolerant of anything but an instant response. Enormous availability of information is fantastic, enormous polarity in political dialogue: not so much. As a supporter of health care reform, same sex marriage, women's rights, tax fairness, a domestic policy responsive to the realities of the present day as opposed to toxic nostalgia, and an international policy that punishes our enemies more than it rewards our private contractors, I am struggling to see how our government (federal and local) is responding to anything except special interests who pay for political campaigns.

Never lose your desire to transform charity into justice, division into civility, selfishness into generosity, cynicism into hope. It's about patience, humility, honor, perseverance. Not everything that is measurable is valuable and not everything that is valuable is measurable.

Stay in touch and keep repairing the world....

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