Time Management in Academia

Mary Anne Jackson, MD
Professor of Pediatrics
University of MO-Kansas City SOM
Section Chief, Infectious Diseases
Children’s Mercy Hospital & Clinics
Faculty Disclosure Information

In the past 12 months, I have not had a significant financial interest or other relationship with the manufacturer(s) of the product(s) or provider(s) of the service(s) that will be discussed in my presentation.

This presentation will not include discussion of pharmaceuticals or devices that have not been approved by the FDA.
Objectives

- Learn organizational and time management strategies
- Identify your personal strengths and weaknesses in time management
- Delineate strategies for improving time management
- How to make more time for the things that are important
- How to decline requests for additional obligations without feeling guilty
"Inefficiency begins when you avoid a few trivial, unpleasant tasks. Soon the backlog grows into a hideous monster, devouring your mental energy, obscuring your vision, and strangling your will to shape your future."

(Duncan Maxwell Anderson)
Outline

1. Time assessment
2. Goal alignment
3. Getting organized
4. 80/20 rule
5. Time wasters
6. Tips from the experts
1. Where Does Time Go?

It may seem like there aren't enough hours in the week to get everything done.
Understanding the Expectations in Academic Pediatrics

- What are standard work hours of an academic pediatric ID specialist?
- What are your defined clinical roles and responsibilities?
- What are your academic goals in teaching and research?
- What administrative/service responsibilities will you have?
Your life vs your work life

168 hours/week
- Sleep 56
- Eat 21
- Grooming 7
- Commute 7
- Family, friends, Social life 27
- Grand Total ~118

50 hours work/wk
- Administrative (10)
- Clinical (15-20 +/-10)
  - In patient/outpatient
  - Documentation/EMR
  - Communication
- Teaching-bedside, lectures (3-5 +/-10)
  - Student/resident
  - Fellow/faculty
  - Community physician
- Research (what is left)
  - define focus, output, funding
    - Clinical, bench, programmatic
- Service (3-5)
  - Committees
    - Hospital, Med School, State, National
Finding Time

Assuming you are not Edward from Twilight, you still have to sleep and eat. If you aren’t time efficient at work, it will spill over to your home life.
So what is the answer?

Start w/ defining your clinical roles and responsibilities
- How many inpatient weeks on ID service
  - Will you also cover any time on a general peds team
- How many days in clinic

Then outline your teaching and research goals

Writing goals for yourself
2. Are your goals in line w/ that of your section chief and chair?

- Objectives should support academic promotion
  - Review the promotions/tenure requirements

- Understand the goals and expectations of your division chief and chair
  - Get them in writing

- Use SMART goals
  - Identify your daily, weekly, monthly and yearly goals
“A goal without a deadline is just a dream”
SMART Goals

- Specific
- Measurable
- Aligned with the organization
- Realistic
- Time bound

Drucker, Peter F., "The Practice of Management"
Organizational Strategies

If your goals are SMART, then breaking down the process for each and every one is the next step.
If your goal is: Publish 2 papers

- Idea→Manuscript
- **Grant writing** [http://www.ninds.nih.gov/funding/write_grant_doc.htm#writing](http://www.ninds.nih.gov/funding/write_grant_doc.htm#writing)
  - Study aims-clear, concise, specific, follow instructions
  - Feasible funding
  - Use your mentors
- IRB approval
- Getting started-necessary personnel and supplies
- Data collection/analysis
- Writing process
- Journal selection/submission/revision
3. Organization: List makers unite!

- Every hour spent planning saves 3-4/week
- Use a daily list to identify necessary tasks
- First thing each am, review your to do list
- Re-prioritize if necessary
- Consider carefully any commitment to more meetings, other activities
- JUST SAY NO
Prioritizing

- Review how you use your time
- Review your to do list
- Prioritize activities as A, B or C
- Spend more time on priority A items
Defining personal strengths and weakness

- Misplaced effort, wasted time
- Procrastination
- Unrealistic expectations or goals
- Over commitment
4. Understand the 80/20 Rule
Don’t work harder, work smarter

- Rooted in observation by Pareto—most things in life are not distributed evenly
- As a business rule: "80% of your sales come from 20% of your clients"

A small portion of your business is generating the bulk of productivity and profitability

- If you are into QI, Juran’s initial work suggested that 20% of the defects caused 80% of the problems

management.about.com/cs/generalmanagement/a/Pareto081202.htm
Putting Pareto’s Principle in Practice

- Approximately 20% of your efforts produce 80% of the results
  it is usually the first 10% and the last 10% that count most.
- Key to making the most effective use of your time-learn to recognize and then focus on that 20%
How can you tell if you’re not successfully using the 80/20 Rule?

According to Pam Vaccaro, president of Designs on Time (a consulting firm in St. Louis): this is not what you want from your academic life......

- You're working on tasks other people want you to, but you have no investment in them.
- You're frequently working on tasks labeled "urgent."
- You're spending time on tasks you are not usually good at doing.
- Activities are taking a lot longer than you expected.
- You find yourself complaining all the time.

http://www.aafp.org/fpm/20000900/76the8.html
Strive for:

- You're engaged in activities that advance your overall purpose in life------ (this assumes you know what your purpose is....)
- You're doing things you have always wanted to do or that make you feel good about yourself.
- You're working on tasks you don't like, but you're doing them knowing they relate to the bigger picture.
- You're delegating tasks to others when possible
- You're happy.
#5 Understanding Time Wasters

- Ineffective communication makes for more work
- You don’t need more meetings
- Get out of email jail: beware of the technology trap
6 Meeting Rules

1. Don't Meet-Know when face to face is best
2. Set Objectives for the Meeting-then the agenda
   Concrete objectives w focused agenda
   Everyone engaged and working
3. Agenda and Assignments-prepare ahead
   One-sentence=meeting objectives
   Topics to be covered
   ✦ Who will address each topic for how long: prepare
4. Assign Action Items
   Don't finish any discussion w/o action plan
5. End it!
   Identify accomplishments and improvements needed b/f next meeting

www.effectivemeetings.com
Technology: curse or blessing?

Survey of 1000 corporate employees who received an average of 41 emails/day → 2 hours/day; 30 min home time
- 88% reported unnecessary email
- 75% indicated over-use of the reply-to-all
- 54% received warnings inbox over-the-limit
- 25% of email processing time was wasted

This = 15 wasted days/year/employee and equated to $152 million loss/10,000 employees

Texting, tweeting, and internet playground danger

http://www.cohesiveknowledge.com
6. What Tips Can We Get From the Experts in Our Field?

- Criteria for participation
- Outline of request
- Responses related to pitfalls summarized
- Specific pearls from each
- Advice for balancing home/work life
Words of Wisdom from Time Management Experts

- **Thomas Boat, MD**
  - Former chairman of pediatrics UNC, Chapel Hill and BK Rachford Professor, Chair and director Cincinnati Children's Research Foundation; Executive Associate Dean UC COM-operations/strategic planning for 500 physicians

- **Lewis First, MD**
  - Senior Associate Dean, Educational and Curriculum Affairs, Professor and Chairman of Pediatrics, U Vermont College of Medicine; Editor, *Pediatrics*

- **George McCracken, MD**
  - Professor of Pediatrics, The Sarah M. and Charles E. Seay Chair in Pediatric Infectious Diseases at UTSW-Dallas; Editor, *Pediatric Infectious Disease Journal*; 450+ publications, trained 86 fellows (80% active researchers)

- **Richard Jacobs, MD**
  - President, Arkansas Children's Hospital Research Institute; Chairman, Dept Pediatrics; Robert H. Fiser, Jr., M.D. Endowed Chair in Pediatrics U Arkansas for Medical Sciences, COM, ABP Pediatric ID subboard chair

- **Sarah Long, MD**
  - Professor of Pediatrics, Drexel University COM, Chief, Section of Infectious Diseases, St. Christopher's Hospital for Children, Philadelphia; Editor, *Principles and Practice Pediatric Infectious Diseases*; Former Chair of the ABP ID subboard and current chair, ABP Board of Directors; Editor, *The Journal of Pediatrics*
1. Procrastination *"If you are going to eat a live frog, don’t spend too much time looking at it first."* Mark Twain

2. Daily distractions

Wasting time on email, tweeting, texting *“Seductive. It encourages individuals to see themselves as immediate and indispensable responders”*

3. Getting upset is ok. *Holding grudges=waste of time, energy and opportunity*

4. Not delegating enough

5. Failure to use a calendar and to look at it

Not “closing”; a deadline is a verbal contract

Not taking the time to get organized on a project.

Relying only on memory for getting things done= naïve

6. Over commitment leads to panic, reduces work quality

Know when to say "No"
Richard Jacobs, MD

**Pearls**
- Nothing should go from your desk to “stacks”; see it, take care of it and then either file it or throw it away
- Make “lists”
- Delegation maximizes production as long as you give clear instructions to **people that you can trust**

**Balance work and home**
- Only worry about the things that you can control
- You don’t sleep at work, and sooner or later you do need to go to sleep

“I love my work, but I married my wife”
PEARLS

- Focus on addressing each piece of mail sequentially, the good, the bad, and the ugly.
- Have a "not to do" list with your "to do" list and keep it balanced.
- Visibility is credibility! And don't try to get everything done in a day; set a time to go home.

BALANCE

"The quality of what you do at home is far more important than the quantity of time spent with those you love. Family/friend time is not the time to multitask—"

PS--for those too busy to be UTD on pop culture, Yahoo offers a site "Prime Time in No Time" that summarizes the greatest hits of what happened the night before on TV in 3-5 minutes.
Pearls

- Money management is not important - it is essential for the academic pediatrician.

- In medicine, you don’t create clinical programs, protect time for teaching or research programs (for long) if you don’t generate dollars to cover costs.

- Pick your battles—you can’t tilt at every windmill and be academically productive. Use your time to meet objectives that count toward academic and program advancement.

- When writing grants, first create the specific aims, then get feedback from experienced investigators. Do this months before the deadline.

“There is time to be a successful academic pediatrician and family-oriented spouse and parent. It is the rare individual who can add another dimension to life without risking either of the first two.”
“I first thought I would give your letter considerable time and thought and then realized that this would hardly qualify as effective time management.”

Three words or pearls come immediately to mind
- Be focused and dedicated
- Prioritize and organize each day
- Enjoy what you do

Balance
- Be home for dinner with the entire family as many evenings each week as possible

“This has worked for me, but I must admit that the overarching ingredient for me is the compulsion to be able to do everything in a manner that I find satisfactory.”
Sarah Long, MD

PEARLS
1) **Morph all work into scholarly activity (study something, teach something, and add something)**
2) Set specific hrs for clinical rounds, teaching seminars, etc *
3) Be selective and once you choose a committee to be involved with, do your homework, engage and do the work; this is one way to garner respect for ability and demonstrate leadership

BALANCE
1) Understand the difference between a job and a career
2) Don’t give up anything important on either front
3) Get solid (not strung-out) help at home for many things.

“Choose to give joyfully at home and at work. You have that choice. The payoff is phenomenal.”
The Journey to Leader

- **Be passionate—and persistent**
  - But make sure you have a shared vision
  - Be wise in creating your goals, then prioritize, and organize

- **Keep everything important, inc personal items, on a single calendar**
  - ie-block 2-4 PM for journal reading=less likely to fill w/ unimportant
  - Keep your CV up to date. When you get a paper, presentation, etc. accepted, ASAP get it on the CV and to your chair, spouse, etc

- "Try to balance items that overtly advance your career vs keeping breadth to your career and interests"
  - Seek interesting, innovative, creative outlets, especially while you are in the formative early years of your career

- **While you are learning to say “no”, also learn when to say “yes.”**
  - If a trusted advisor tells you something would be good for your career, do it.
  - If a well recognized leader is giving a talk, attend it.

- **Think outside the box: there are non-traditional leadership roles**
  - Consider formal leadership training if you aspire to leadership roles.
And remember:

“Only the mediocre are always at their best” (Jean Giraudoux).