

Raphael Pollock, MD, PhD, tells a story about Leading Self

Dr. Pollock served as Chair of the Dept. of Surgical Oncology from 1994-2010 and Head of the Division of Surgery from 1997-2012. In an interview conducted in 2012 he talks about stepping into the role of department chair and how he established his new leadership persona.



Creating a Leadership Persona

So I became chair in November of '93 and spent much of the next six months trying to help the people in the department come to a better understanding of who they were and where we could go as a group and instilling a sense of confidence....that we really had messages to deliver and things to develop and skills to hone...

There was a very large office in the area in the Department of Surgical Oncology that our physician assistants were in, and that office was actually earmarked as the chairman's office. I made the conscious decision to stay in my small office rather than take that over because it would have displaced the physician assistants over to the Houston Main Building which would have been very inconvenient for them and for the faculty, and my own office was very adequate for my purposes. And I also did not want other people in the department to think now that I was the chair that I somehow had something over them or that I was hungry for recognitions and trappings and symbols, which was the case among my predecessors—my immediate predecessor, in any event.

...The offices had ...a half wall with a window that you could pull the blinds on. I always like to have the blinds up so I could see what was going on outside.... Someone snapped a photograph of me standing up, talking on the telephone. Which I didn't know exactly where that would show back up again, but ... we have this graduation banquet, and the fellows roasted the faculty and the faculty roasted the graduating fellows, all in good fun.... Whichever fellow had shot that picture showed it on the screen and said, "This is our new commander-in-chief calling out the artillery targets, and here's the target." The next slide was a picture of the man who, at the time, was the chairman of surgery at Sloan-Kettering ... superimposed on a dart board, and there was a dart right on his nose, which was the bull's eye.... At the time, the Sloan-Kettering fellowship was absolutely considered the top training program and Anderson was a distinct second place....So it was kind of a fun thing.

About This Content

This interview clip was taken from an in-depth interview conducted for the Making Cancer History Voices Oral History Project. This ongoing project currently contains almost 400 interview hours with MD Anderson institution builders.

The transcript has been edited from the original.

The content is available for all uses.

To explore the full interview go to: <http://mdanderson.libguides.com/PollockR>

About the speaker:

Raphael Pollock, MD (left MDA 2013)

Interviewed: 2012

Primary app't: Department of Surgical Oncology.

Research: surgical techniques, surgical stress, natural killer cells, molecular approaches to soft tissue sarcoma; angiogenesis, chemoresistance, novel therapeutics

Admin: Chair, Department of Surgical Oncology (1994 – 2010); Head, Division of Surgery (1997 – 2012).

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