



MedStar National
Rehabilitation Network



GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY
School of Medicine

What I Learned from the Disability Community about Leadership in Health Care



Alan Clarke Memorial Lecture III
Burwood Academy & University of Otago
Beavan Lecture Theatre
Christchurch, NZ
January 22, 2025



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With apologies to anyone
I may have overlooked.

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Prof. Alan Clarke

Akaroa, March 2003



Abstract

Ask people what they think is the one leadership trait most essential for effective leadership. You will get as many answers as people you ask.

There is one quality or trait that is rarely, if ever, on anyone's list and yet I believe it is foundational. I will contrast leaders with and without this foundational trait.

I will outline why leaders with this trait are especially effective and how people missing this trait are the kind of people for whom you do not want to work.

I will illustrate why those without this essential trait are—or can be, immensely destructive, often unethical, and should be avoided at all costs.

I will explain why this trait underpins all that we do in health care, rehabilitation practice, and in health science research.

I only wish I had learned this earlier in my career. I want to pass on insights on how this essential trait can enhance your career, your leadership style, and your sense of professional fulfillment no matter your role in the organization.

Today's Roadmap

1. Consider a global list of leadership traits commonly mentioned.
 2. Identify an essential trait that often goes unacknowledged.
 3. Compare those with, and without, this trait.
 4. Explain how this leadership trait comes to expression over the course of one's career.
 5. Consider the trait's dark side.
 6. Explore why this trait is especially important in health and medical rehabilitation practice and research.
- Will be building on Alan Clarke Memorial Lecture II



Leadership

- One of the most intensely studied topics
- Thousands of seminars, courses, institutes, conferences, books, videos, podcasts
 - On how to be a leader or more effective leader
 - The 3,5,10 essential traits of an effective leader
 - “Developing the organizational leaders of tomorrow”
 - “Hot leadership topics for 2024”
 - “The 5 Essential Leadership Skills for the Future”
 - “How Good are Your Leadership Skills?”
 - “The 10 Traits of All Great Leaders”
 - “Skills Good Leaders Need”



1-min. assignment

- What I'd like you to do:
 - Write down 3 traits that you believe are hallmarks of an effective leader.
 - Yes, you may cheat! Google the question if you like.
 - Write down your selection on a separate piece of paper.
 - Exchange your paper with the person nearest to you.



Compare notes (nouns & adjectives)

Accountable	Endurance	Knowledgeable	Proactive
Adaptable	Engaged	Likeable	Purposeful, purpose-driven
Agility	Engaging	Listener	Reasonable
Articulate	Entrepreneurial	Loyalty	Resilience
Assertive	Enthusiasm	Maturity	Resourceful
Attitude	Ethical	Mentor	Respectful
Authenticity	Example, lead by	Mindfulness	Responsible
Boldness	Fairness	Motivating	Risk taker
Charisma	Gracious	Optimism	Self-awareness
Clarity	Honesty	Organized	Selflessness
Coach	Humility	Passion	Self-managing
Collaborator	Humor	Patience	Strategic
Commitment	Initiative	Performance-driven	Teacher
Communicator	Inspirational	Pivotability	Transparent
Confident	Integrity	Positivity	Trust/trustworthy
Energetic	Intuition	Presence	Visionary

The essential trait

Validation

to validate

to be a validator

“Validational leadership”

- Many other leadership traits hinge on this one trait
- If one has this trait, many other positive traits will follow naturally.
- It is pivotal but rarely mentioned.
- An essential, a necessary trait but not a sufficient one.

Yet, it is validation we all seek

We seek...

- To belong
- To be part of something bigger than ourselves
- To be accepted
- To be seen as contributing
- To being able to manage our own affairs
- To be valued

Note: *In American culture especially, work is seen as important source of validation of who we are. Leaders and managers need to be cognizant of, and address, this need.*

Definition

To validate:

- To recognize or establish the worthiness or legitimacy of something.
- To verify data, sources, processes, elections, etc.
- To **validate** a **person** or **group of people** is to affirm that they are valued, respected, and have intrinsic worth.
 - Role of social movement: to confirm, to validate the intrinsic worth of an otherwise disenfranchised group.
 - Two people in an intimate relationship expect mutual validation and affirmation.
 - A real friendship is based on a shared sense of mutual validation
- Validation is what people expect from their leaders, managers, partners, parents.

Validation

- Some leaders validate instinctively:
 - Bill Clinton was known for this behavior: He would listen to an ordinary person intensively even in a crowded room of important people. He did not look over his shoulder to see if there was anyone else more important that he need to speak with.
 - The person felt intensely validated by the president's undivided attention. Made to feel like the most important person in the room.
 - That's validation.

Validation: underused term

We are prone to use other terms. We are prone to talk about enhancing a person's sense of:

- *Self-worth*
- *Self-esteem*
- *Control*
- *Choice*
- *Self-direction*
- *Self-determination*
- *Self-efficacy*

- We have instruments that measure many of these concepts.
- We try to measure “patient satisfaction” when the real issue is patient sense of validation.
- We do not have measures for validation.

It's not self-esteem that is lacking but the absence of feeling validated.

About validation

- Validation is a basic human need starting early in life.
- People need and want to be validated for who they are, not what they have achieved.
- People who do not feel validated in early life, often feel insecure, uncertain, unconfident, in adult life. Can be a problem.

What are the attributes/traits of a validating leader?

- If a person is validating leader, many other attributes/traits follow naturally.
 - What are they?
- One way to cull out these attributes is to contrast a validating leader with his or her nemesis or polar opposite, i.e., the narcissist.



Validator vs. narcissist leader (1)

Validator	Narcissist
Seeks to validate others	Obsessive need to validate self
Affirms others	Craves constant affirmation (e.g., ratings, no. of “likes” on Facebook, no. Twitter and Instagram followers)
Listens attentively	Talks, tweets, incessantly; talks over others
Prioritizes others’ needs	Prioritizes own needs (often at the expense of others)
Credits others: shares credit generously	Takes credit beyond what is merited
Willingness to take backstage	Quick to take front and center stage; excessive need for name recognition
Self-effacing	Brag; peddles self-glorifying stories & fantasies

Validator vs. narcissist leader (2)

Validator	Narcissist
Empathetic	Insensitive, disparaging, ruthless, selfish
Mentors, coaches	Dismisses mentoring*
Encourages growth & prof. development	Demands submissiveness
Nurtures others	Exploits others
Cherishes staff success & development	Sees successful staff as incipient competitors
Takes responsibility for mishaps	Quick to blame others
Leads through collaboration	Dominates
Fosters in-staff collaboration	Fosters in-staff competition
Fosters buy-in & ownership	Demands compliance/obedience

*“When they do mentor, they . . . try to make their protégés out to be smaller and paler versions of themselves.”

Validator vs. narcissist leader (3)

Validator	Narcissist
Modest but assertive	Self-centered and arrogant
Inspires hope	Creates fear
Builds trust	Creates distrust
Discloses, open, transparent	Conceals, lies, exaggerates
Values facts, evidence, science	Truth is fluid, flexible, “alternative facts”
Welcomes critical feedback	Defensive, hyper-sensitive to criticism or perceived slights
Open, vulnerable, and genuine	Closed, “invincible,” and superficial
Builds loyalty	Demands fealty
Relationships based on shared values, loyalty, affection	Relationships are purely transactional
Merit is earned	Entitled

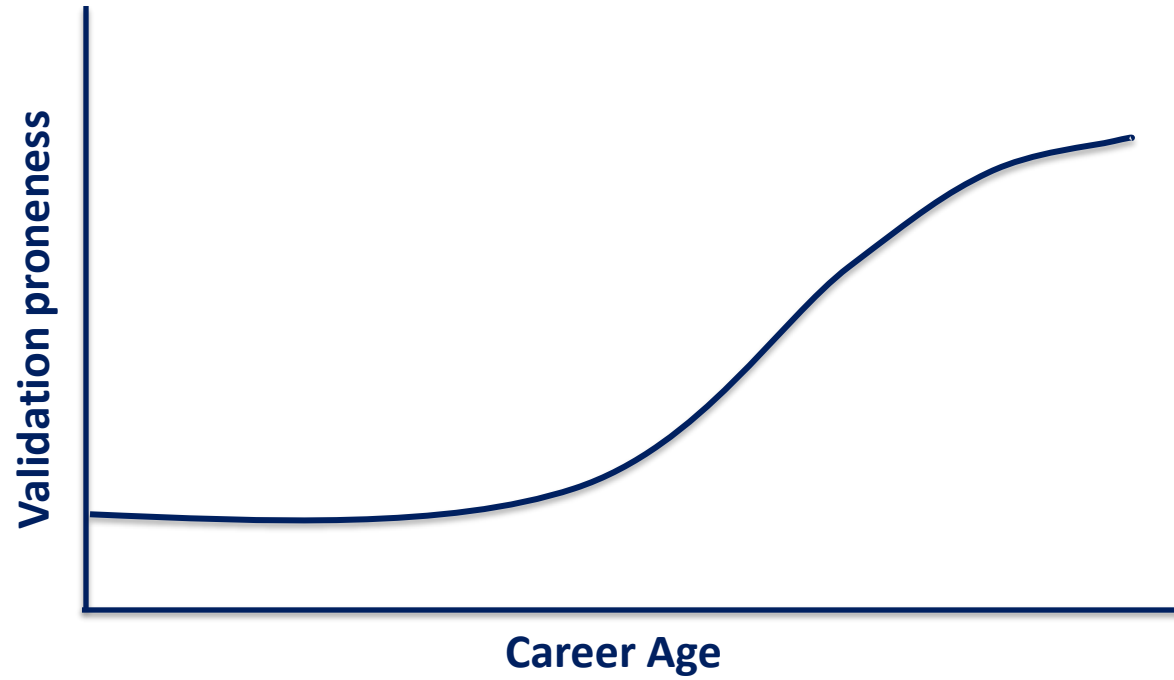
Validator vs. narcissist leader (4)

Validator	Narcissist
Inspires hope	Creates fear
Creates positive work culture	Creates toxic, hostile, chaotic work environment
Fosters long-term commitment	Fosters short-term thinking
Low staff turnover	High staff turnover
Does not differentiate on class, status, prestige	“Wants to be associated only with high status, people, places, or things.”
Plays by the rules, but willing to challenge unfair rules	Does not play fair; rules do not apply to them
Demonstrates respect in conflict	Demeans, intimidates, bullies, belittles others
Seeks understanding in conflict	Psychological manipulator, emotional predator, e.g., gaslighting
Conflict resolver	Pugnacious/brash
Win/win	Win/lose: winners, losers, & suckers
Secure	Insecure

Validator vs. narcissist

- There has been a lot of literature and discussion about narcissistic leaders and their pathologies.
- But we do not systematically study their opposites as a force for good.

Validation proneness

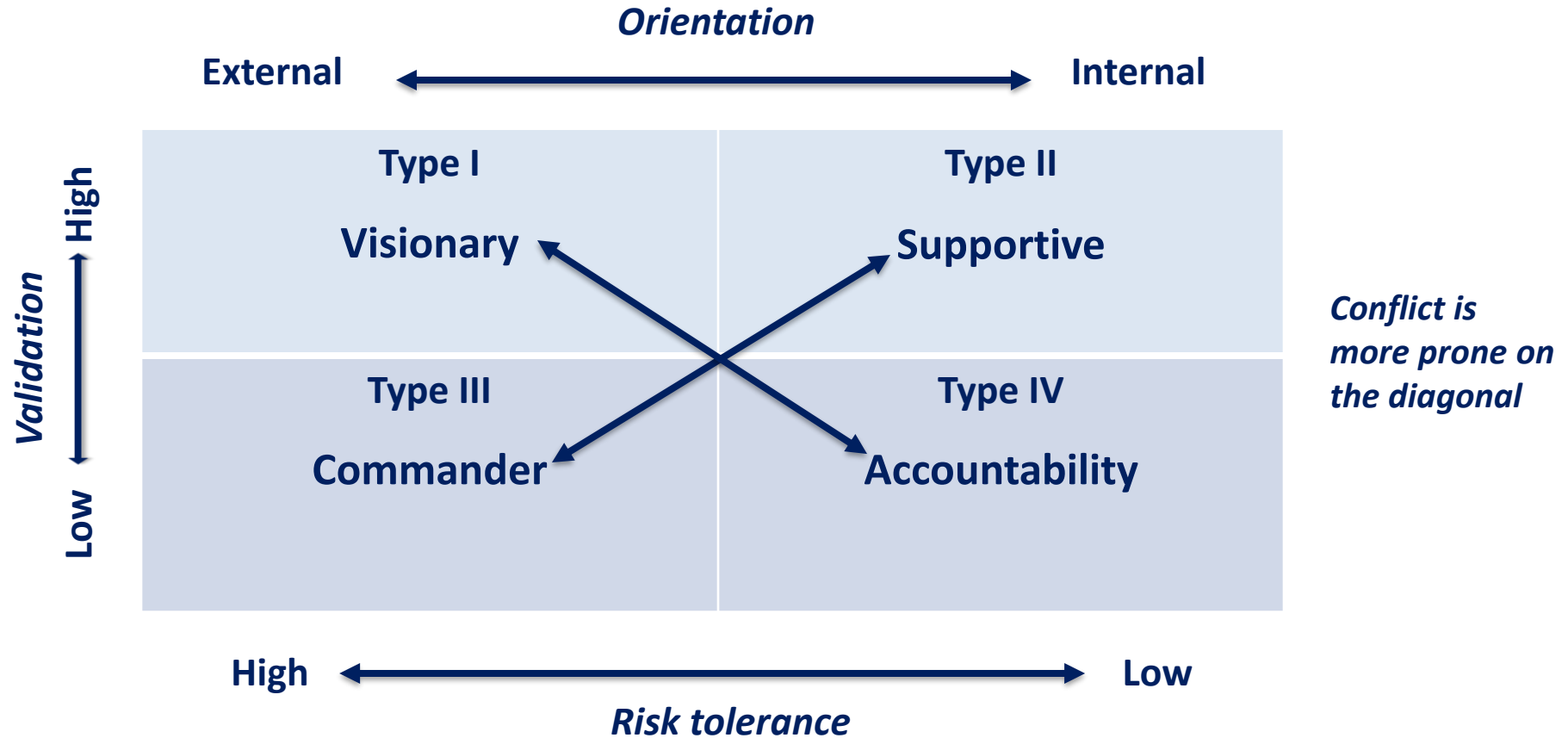


Validator – narcissist continuum

The validator-narcissist relationship can be viewed
either as a polarity or a continuum



Validation among 4 leadership types



Validation video

Watch first 3:16 minutes of this video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cbk980jV7Ao>



The dark side of validation

- When leaders seek to . . .
 - Validate our worst instincts and negative assumptions about other people
 - Validate misinformation or disinformation; spread rumors
 - Validate the disparagement of well-vetted science (e.g., vaccines)
- Narcissist leaders are especially prone to validate when . . .
 - Expect reciprocity from those they validate with their negative ideas.
 - Induce people to support policies that are not in their best economic interests.
 - Validation can trump most other considerations. No pun intended.
 - Validation is, for better or worse, a powerful political and leadership tool.



Fake validation

- Sometimes a leader, a narcissist or otherwise, will praise/compliment someone in front of others:
 - But the praise is insincere and manipulative.
 - The so-called “validation” or praise is meant to be transactional and reciprocal:
 - I praise you, because I know and expect that you will be more loyal to me.
 - You perceive me as your sponsor when I deal with others, especially people with whom I am in conflict. I want you on my side.
 - It is a loyalty-seeking effort that often backfires.

FAKE

Why “**validational leadership**” is especially important in health care?

Etymology of validation

Valid

- From: *L. Validus*: Strong, effective

Validate

- From: *L. Validatus*: to make valid; substantiate; confirm, to give force to; legalize

Invalid

- From *L. Invalidus*: not strong, infirm, of no legal force



Hôtel des Invalides
Paris, France
Literally,
House of the Disabled
House of the Invalids



Consider the word “invalid”

- ***Invalid***
n. = infirm, sickly, unable to take care of self, weak
- **Dutch:** rehabilitation = *revalidatie*

The arc of disability history bends toward validation



Models of disability

Moral Model 1	Leprosy Model 2	Eugenics Model 3	“Special” Model 4
Medical Model 5	Charity Model 6	Polio Model 7	Rehabilitation Model 8
Blind Model 9	Deaf Culture Model 10	Welfare State Model 11	Semi-autonomy Model 12
Fokus Model 13	Independent Living Model 14	Disability Rights Model 15	“Fix-it” Model 16

Introduced in Alan Clarke Memorial Lecture II,

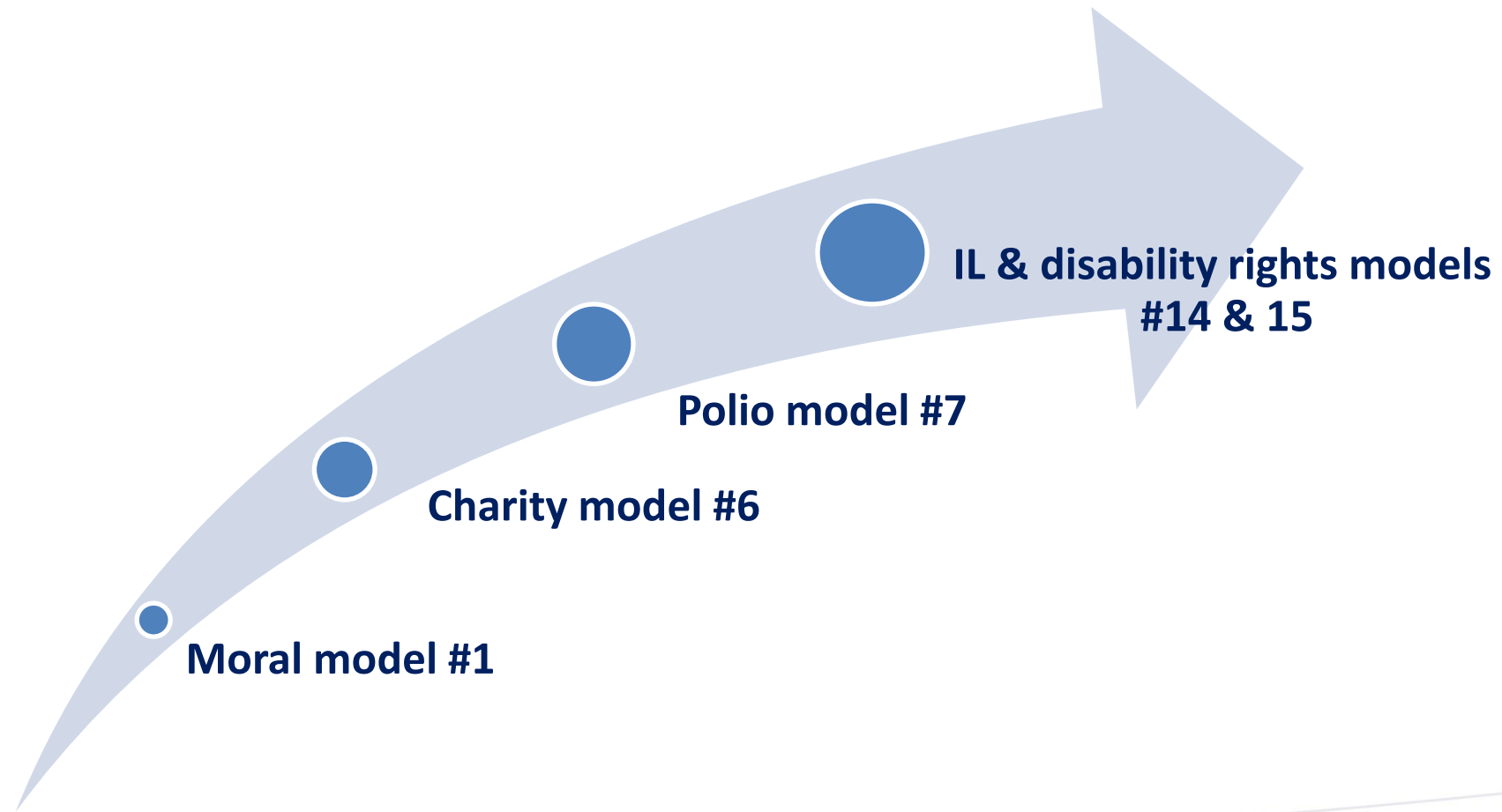
Oct. 14, 2010

Christchurch City Hall

Models of disability

- These models can be differentiated on the following dimensions:
 - Definition of problem
 - Etiology of problem
 - Locus of problem
 - Solution to problem, interventions
 - Social role
 - Who controls
 - Desired outcomes
 - How they validate or invalidate the worth of an individual with a disability
 - Where and when they have come to expression

The arc of disability history bends toward validation



Model 7: Polio Model

Franklin Roosevelt

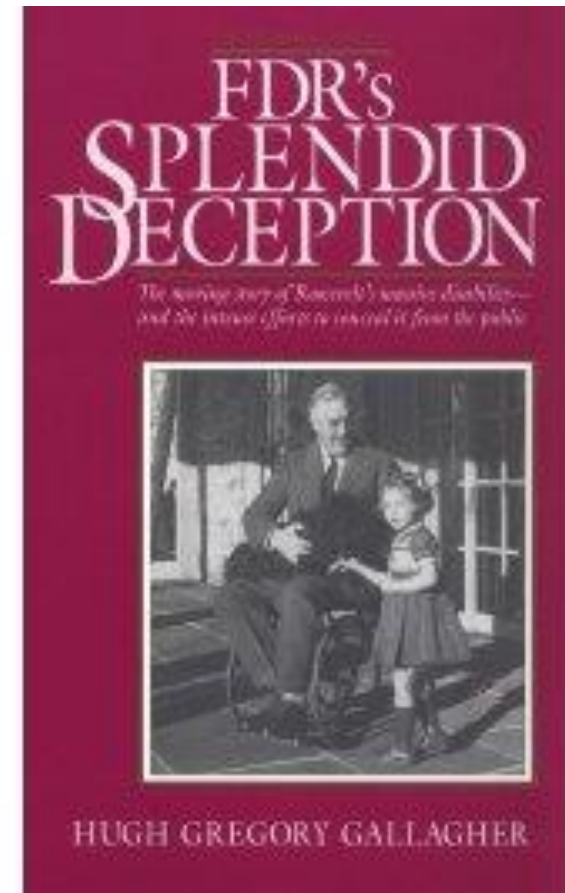


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Model 7: Polio Model



**Franklin
Roosevelt**



Model 7: Polio model



**Edward
Eckenhoff**

1943-2018

A leader with SCI who came of age when polio model still dominated



- Medical rehabilitation is about validation.
- In many ways, validation is at the core of what we do.
- We are in the “validation business.”
- Hence, the Dutch word for rehabilitation, i.e., “**revalidatie**,” or “**revalidation**” may not be so far off as we might think.
- If we are in the validation business, then we need a validating culture with a validating leadership.



Translated: Rehabilitation Medicine Knowledge Ctr.
University Medical Center, Utrecht
Brain Center

Validation and role of science

- The assumptions underlying these various models creep into our science and research.
- Science reflects the prevailing disability model(s)
- Science, is one of society's most important validators, often legitimizes the prevailing model.
- Other important validation sources:
 - The law
 - Religion
 - Election results

Validation and role of science

- Sloppy research reflects negatively on the very populations we seek to serve
 - Sloppy science devalues people with disabilities
 - Extra burden put on disability and rehabilitation researchers.

Validation and role of science

- Ways in which research leaders and scientists can validate:
 - Take into account the ideas and views of individuals with disabilities.
 - Make sure that the assumptions governing the research are in keeping with the manner in which individuals with disabilities want to be viewed.
 - View individuals with disabilities as stakeholders and/or partners in the research process.
 - Make sure that the outcome metrics used are in keeping with values deemed important by individuals with disabilities.
 - Conduct research rigorously.
 - **Note:** Validation builds stakeholder equity

Other opportunities for validation

- Those of us doing science in patient care environments have many ways to validate informally.
 - Do not view individual as furniture as you pass through waiting rooms.
 - Make eye contact, acknowledge.
 - Communicate, do not ignore.
- Every patient encounter can be a validating or invalidating moment.



Opportunities for validation

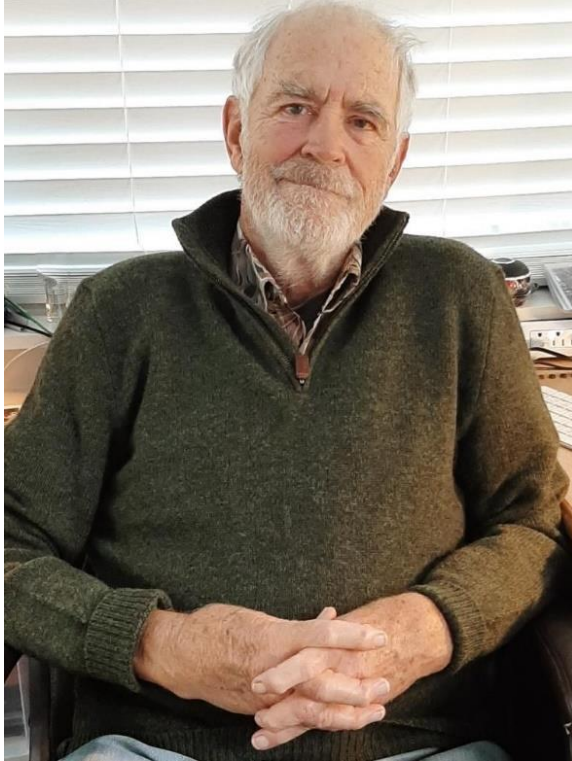
- Those of us who work in hospital environments have sometimes forgotten the art of hospitality.
 - We have taken hospitality out of hospital.
 - At the heart of hospitality is the art of validation.
 - Hospitals can be such invalidating environments.
 - When a person is newly impaired or disabled, it can be a very invalidating and vulnerable moment.
 - What is my worth? My value?
 - Our actions and speech must always be validating.
 - Validating leaders create validating cultures.

Opportunities for validation

- Institutions are “carriers” of our society’s “cultural DNA”
 - Passed from to one generation to another
 - Insight from Stanley Elkins
- Each institution also has its own cultural DNA
 - Which disability models inform our cultural DNA?
 - Which leadership models inform our leadership styles?
 - Are they validating?

A validational leader

Paul Corcoran, MD



June 8, 1934 – Nov. 21, 2019

- Was a validator
- Saw other people's strengths
- Never talked down to his students, patients, staff, colleagues
- Affirmed the aspirations of people with disabilities
- All felt validated in his presence.
- He taught us the "art of validation."
- **Thank you, Paul.** I would not be here today if it were not for you.

**G DeJong, J Clarke, A Clarke
Akaroa, March 2003**



**THANK
YOU**

**Questions?
Discussion**

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