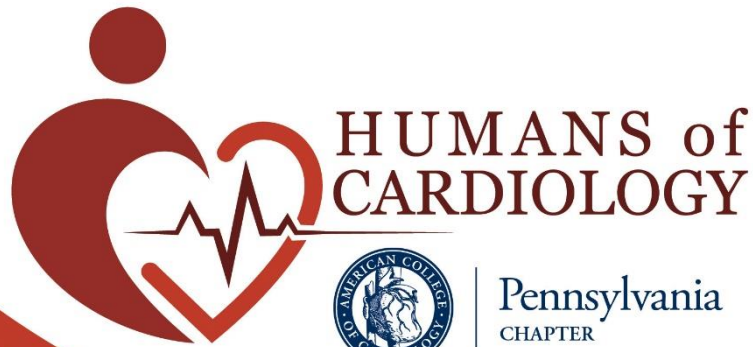


OPEN FORUM INITIATIVE



While in training, I was keenly aware of one attending cardiologist who used to lecture his patients about their weight while he was morbidly obese, and another who lectured patients to stop smoking while he hid in his car and smoked like a chimney. I was in my late 20's, young and enthusiastic and I decided then, that I would always try my best to be a good role model for my patients. Credibility is important: we need to "practice what we preach".

I have never smoked, yet I found my weakness for junk food caught up with me in my late 40's. As a Philadelphia native and diehard Eagles fan, I do like my cheesesteaks (as well as my wings, ribs, hoagies, funnel cake, crab fries, etc, etc). One day I woke up with the realization that my 20's were long gone, and my spouse, my job and my kids had taken over my life - and my pants just didn't fit the way I wanted them to. What felt to be out of nowhere, my BMI was 29 and I was flirting with the dreaded metabolic syndrome.

Clearly this did not happen overnight, but one day I got on the scale and looked down and thought....how can I preach a healthy diet and weight loss to patients when I'm struggling to fit into my own pants? Long gone are the Jim Bakker/Jimmy Swaggart days of "preach the right thing and then do whatever you want". What I wanted was to be a good role model. I began working out, eating a proper diet, and listening to mentors like Paul Thompson and Kim Williams - role models for me and, no doubt, excellent role models for their patients.

My BMI is now down below 26 (and dropping) and I feel much better; not only do I have more energy and more clarity, but my patients notice it as well and I hope it motivates them to do the same. I sympathize with them as they struggle with diet & weight themselves, and I try to share some of the lessons I've learned along the way...

The bottom line: 1) we all have weaknesses/flaws, 2) lifestyle modifications are hard, and 3) we need to remember we are role models for our patients (whether we want to be or not.) This can be a life-long struggle for them just as it is for us. Yes, it is absolutely, positively our job to lecture and preach to our patients about lifestyle modifications but we should try to do it with kindness and understanding. We need to be patient and compassionate, yet firm at the same time, to help our patients be the healthiest they can be.

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