



**Paramedicine Education - No Longer Paramedic Training; A New Breed of Educators by** Edward "Ted" Lee. A.A.S., BS, Ed.S., NRP, CCEMT-P  
EMS Educator

As the educational model changes for EMS with regard to directives from the National Registry of EMT's (NREMT), The Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) and Committee on Accreditation of Educational Programs for the Emergency Medical Services Professions (CoAEMSP), the time-old tradition of EMS education has begun the transition to a more formalized and time-tested model of education that is comparable to others in the Health Science professional setting. EMS has long looked for a definition as to where the career path should be placed, and while many look towards other professions outside of health care, many feel the true home is within the Health Sciences. Given this definition, a more formalized model has moved the majority of Paramedicine education into the college setting thus setting up a dynamic change for those teaching EMS topics in the future.

While new students may not feel the changes as deeply, those in EMS education are being impacted the most. Increased levels of required education, actual experience in a more formalized educational system, and a mindset that is quite different from the "training" model have changed the environment for EMS educators and the long-held traditions of the profession are no longer adequate to provide the education for future generations. These factors have left our profession at a difficult point in time with a limited pool of qualified candidates to fill the role of educators for the immediate future, and requires those in these positions to begin preparing the next generation for an environment that is much different than the one generations of Paramedics "grew-up" in and served the public.

The responsibility of educators is moving at a faster pace and the responsibilities and accountability requirements are ever increasing. With schools, accreditation bodies and state agencies tracking recruitment, retention and results of programs, the demands on educators are more than ever before. With these changes in the education of the EMS professionals, the career paths for Paramedicine educators are changing dramatically. Formalized education at the Bachelor's degree level are minimal requirements and the focus on education-based degrees are becoming the standard in many areas. Couple these with the need to continue toward Master's and Doctoral work while continuing to work in the field are setting the bar high for those interested in a career in education.

As if all the additional factors are not enough to consider for the potential educator, the need for a different definition of what it takes to be successful at this level becomes the next issue to address. While in the past a successful Paramedic career was the only standard for those interested in moving on to teaching, this is no longer the case. It is not enough to be good at your job, it takes so much more to teach others. The noted author William A. Ward once said, "The mediocre teacher tells. The

good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires." The next generation of Paramedicine students and the public deserve this standard from those in the educator's role. The unique aspect of this quote is that you can replace the term leader for teacher and it holds the same level of impact for the profession.

The role of an educator is not to show how well they know the subject matter, but instead pass on the knowledge they have while at the same time opening the student up to the wide world of information and life-long learning. Carbon copies of the instructor should never be the goal of any program, for the copy of a copy is never quite as clear, and the potential for exaggerated weaknesses are compounded in the end. While in the classical sense, the mentor-mentee relationship defined in Homer's *Odyssey* is a one-on-one experience, those in education are asked to expand their reach to mentor multiple students or mentees. Paramedicine educators should be much like mentors to their students, assuming the role the trusted guides that enable the student to gain the knowledge, experience and confidence to go out into the world and be successful.

Two stories listed below reflect the two most important aspects facing the Paramedicine educator today. The stories of *The Farmer* and *The Cherokee Legend* point out the importance of the needed struggle of the student and the responsibility of the educator to protect the student during their development.

#### ***The Farmer – Author Unknown***

*One afternoon while working around his yard, a man spotted a cocoon. Looking closely, he noticed that something was struggling to get through a very small hole in the cocoon. He sat and watched for several minutes before he was certain that what he was seeing was a butterfly attempting to get through the hole in the cocoon. As he watched, the insect inside the cocoon pushed and twisted, but could not squeeze its way through the hole since the hole was smaller than the body of the butterfly. Intending to help the butterfly emerge, the man took his pocketknife and very carefully cut the hole larger so the butterfly could pass through the opening. The butterfly emerged easily with no effort at all. However, the butterfly had a body that was far too big to permit its undeveloped wings to lift it. The man waited with hope that the butterfly would continue to transform, but this never happened. The butterfly needed to struggle to squeeze its body through the small opening. In the struggle, the wings would gain strength and the body would become smaller. Without this struggle, the butterfly never developed into a beautiful insect that could fly from flower to flower. In fact, it died quickly, never able to develop.*

*What the man in his kindness and haste did not understand was that the restricting cocoon and the struggle required for the butterfly to get through the tiny opening were nature's way of forcing fluid from the body of the butterfly into its wings so that it would be ready for flight once it achieved its freedom from the cocoon.*

In various environments during their Paramedicine education, students will encounter uncomfortable situations and it is through these situations they will continue to grow and develop. Too often during these struggles though, well-meaning individuals end up hurting the student's development and eventual growth in their educational process in an attempt to help make the process easy on them or take over the procedure instead of allowing them to work through the process. The realization that it is the struggle that makes one stronger is lost on these individuals, for until you are required to work through the process, you never fully understand it. The old adage from the military that "the more you sweat in training

the less you bleed in battle”, while dramatic is at its core the sentiment that mastery does not come without struggle and in times of stress or need mastery is needed and desired ultimately.

### ***The Cherokee Legend - Author Unknown***

*Do you know the legend of the Cherokee Indian youth's rite of passage? His father takes him into the forest, blindfolds him and leaves him alone. He is required to sit on a stump the whole night and not remove the blindfold until the rays of the morning sun shine through it. He cannot cry out for help to anyone. Once he survives the night, he is a MAN. He cannot tell the other boys of this experience, because each lad must come into manhood on his own. The boy is naturally terrified. He can hear all kinds of noises. Wild beasts must surely be all around him. Maybe even some human might do him harm.*

*The wind blew the grass and earth, and shook his stump, but he sat stoically, never removing the blindfold. It would be the only way he could become a man!*

*Finally, after a horrific night the sun appeared and he removed his blindfold. It was then that he discovered his father sitting on the stump next to him. He had been at watch the entire night, protecting his son from harm.*

To place students in situations that are taxing is expected and required given the position of the educator, but it is not enough to cause the struggle. Difficultly without meaning, guidance and protection do not offer the educational environment needed by today's students. The intent is to provide them with the opportunity to grow, not to set them up for failure. The educational environment is often a short-lived experience that must be designed to bring the most out of the student in that given time, for once they leave the program they are on their own.

In closing, the role of the Paramedicine educator can be a heavy burden, with immense responsibility and at times struggles and frustration. This responsibility is not only owed to the student, but to the profession, to the community and to each and every patient the student interacts with during their career. As the educational model changes for EMS professionals so must those taking up the role of the educator. The requirements both internally and externally placed on the next generation of education professionals are more now than at any time in the short history of EMS, but these requirements are necessary to meet the increased demands of the field. The opportunity to shape the future of the profession is one that must be taken seriously, but is one with countless rewards as you watch students succeed in their careers.

Dedicated to those “students”, formal and informal, who it has been my pleasure to interact with throughout my career, it is my sincerest hope that I was a worthy mentor.

Edward “Ted” Lee. A.A.S., BS, Ed.S., NRP, CCEMT-P  
EMS Educator