To Act As A Unit

THE STORY OF
THE CLEVELAND CLINIC
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THE CLEVELAND CLINIC

Fourth Edition

JOHN D. CLOUGH, M.D., Editor

CLEVELAND CLINIC PRESS
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An army of sheep led by a lion would defeat
an army of lions led by a sheep.
—Arab Proverb

LESS THAN A DECADE HAS PASSED SINCE THE CLEVELAND CLINIC PUBLISHED
the third edition of To Act as a Unit, but the pace of change has
accelerated to the point where the third edition is already hopeless-
ly outdated. Since 1996, the Clinic’s 75th anniversary year, the
organization has dedicated three major buildings on the main cam-
pus, established the Cleveland Clinic Health System, opened or
acquired 14 regional satellite facilities, expanded the Florida opera-
tion to new campuses in Weston and Naples, begun a major service
improvement initiative based on leadership development, and
announced plans for a new medical school. Through it all, the staff
has continued to grow at an exponential rate.

Although the focus of the organization is solidly on the future,
some reflections on the past are in order. The phrase “to act as a
unit,” which serves as the title of this book, has become a second
motto for The Cleveland Clinic Foundation. It was extracted from
the journal of George W. Crile, later known as George Crile, Sr., who
wrote it as he was reminiscing about his professional relationship
with his partners, surgeons Frank Bunts and William Lower, in
France during World War I.

Over the years, the phrase has taken on an egalitarian connota-
tion that has become engrained in the culture of the organization,
expressing the cooperative spirit of group practice. Crile viewed this
salubrious concept with a touch of cynicism, however. In fact, he
was once quoted as having said, "mediocrity well organized is more efficient than brilliancy combined with strife and discord." Crile's apparent assumption that these two attributes—organization and brilliancy—are mutually exclusive is interesting, and the institution he helped found may have proved him erroneous in this assumption.

It is most likely that what Crile had in mind on that battlefield in France was a military "unit" whose predictable function was assured by the fact that its members were used to following orders. It also implies that strong leadership is a sine qua non for success.

Crile, himself, was used to providing strong leadership. As Chief of Surgery at Lakeside Hospital, he led a team of Cleveland's best surgeons of the time. When war broke out, he organized and led the Lakeside unit, which set up an army hospital in France, where he found himself when he coined the famous phrase. He became enthralled with the team approach to patient care that characterized military medicine in that setting and resolved to apply it in his peacetime practice after the war.

The Cleveland Clinic, a group practice that has always had strong leadership since its inception in 1921, was the result. Democracy came to the Clinic more than 30 years later, in the form of the Board of Governors, which did not exist until 1955. The Board of Governors has varied in its importance in the daily life of the Clinic, depending on the style of leadership in place at the time. In reality, the power of the mostly elected Board of Governors, which receives its authority from the Board of Trustees, derives from the Governors' annual duty to (re)appoint the top leadership (i.e., the officers of the Foundation: Chief Executive Officer, Chief Operating Officer, Chief Financial Officer, and Chief of Staff), subject to ratification by the Trustees. Historically, the Clinic's leadership stays in place at the pleasure of the Board of Governors, the composition of which is determined by the staff. This approach has worked very well over the years.

Thus, the relevant meaning of the phrase "to act as a unit" has evolved over the years to something possibly more powerful than its original intent. There is no question that the group practice model, as it exists at The Cleveland Clinic, has been successful beyond the wildest dreams of the founders. Those familiar with the organization's professional staff recognize a level of collegiality and teamwork, both in patient care and in academic pursuits, that transcends
disciplinary borders and belies the concept of simply following orders efficiently. The ideal of “organized brilliancy,” which Crile’s statement implied was impossible, may have come as close to full realization at The Cleveland Clinic as it does anywhere.

To return to the matter at hand, this fourth edition is structured similarly to the third. Some chapters have changed but little, while others are entirely new. We have specifically attributed chapter authorship in this edition, the better to recognize the efforts of the many contributors to this work. Many of the quotations at the heads of chapters (a new feature in the third edition) are retained, but some have been changed by special request. Each chapter is now divided into sections, as in the Internet edition. I have edited all the chapters, heavily in some cases, more lightly in others, and I assume sole responsibility for any errors that have crept in during this process. I thank the Clinic’s archivists, Carol Tomer and Fred Lautzenheiser, for once again critically reviewing this work for accuracy and style, and for being a limitless source of good ideas and information, particularly about the Clinic’s early years. I also thank Peter Studer, head of the Department of Scientific Publications and publisher of the Cleveland Clinic Journal of Medicine, Kathy Dunasky of the Department of Scientific Publications, Robert Kay, M.D., the Clinic’s Chief of Staff, and Floyd D. Loop, M.D., the Clinic’s Chief Executive Officer, for their careful review of the manuscript prior to publication. This book could not have been completed in its present form without their help.

—JOHN D. CLOUGH, M.D.
February 7, 2004

FOREWORD

CREDO: The singular purpose of The Cleveland Clinic Foundation is to benefit humanity through the efficient, effective, and ethical practice of medicine, by advancing scientific investigation and medical education, by maintaining the highest standard of quality, and by honoring creativity and innovation. Each member of the organization is a guardian of this enterprise and is responsible for assuring that the Cleveland Clinic is synonymous with the finest health care in the world.

For the past 83 years, The Cleveland Clinic has lived up to the tenets of this credo and upheld the highest standards of medical practice, research, and education. A number of factors contribute to our ability to do so. These include physician leadership, our not-for-profit, group practice model, the skill and experience of our physician staff, academic achievement, and an institutional culture that places a premium on hard work and professional accomplishment. The four founders of The Cleveland Clinic left us a model of medicine that not only served them well in their own time, but has emerged as an optimal institutional framework for medicine in the 21st century.

Since the last edition of To Act as A Unit, The Cleveland Clinic has continued to evolve. Among many new developments, we have opened the Cleveland Clinic Lerner College of Medicine of Case Western Reserve University, which is devoted to the education of physician investigators. We have improved our clinical quality measurement through our Quality Institute and begun a genetics institute and stem-cell center. We are moving in a favorable direction toward the construction of a new Cleveland Clinic Heart Center and growing in a thousand ways to meet the health, science, and educational needs of the coming century.
This fourth edition of To Act as A Unit is compiled by John Clough, M.D., a writer and editor whose consummate skills have added inestimably to the value of its contents. Through his contributions and those of his valued predecessors, we can have the pleasure of tracking The Cleveland Clinic’s growth from a small group practice to the second largest private medical center in the world. We can see how The Cleveland Clinic has remained true to its core values while pursuing the most advanced clinical practices and scientific knowledge.

To Act as A Unit reminds us that we are only the temporary stewards of an enduring public trust and that we are accountable for maintaining its tradition of excellence. The Cleveland Clinic has been a beacon of health to people everywhere in times of illness and wellness, crisis and confidence. We hope that To Act as A Unit will inspire us as we write the future of medicine and create The Cleveland Clinic of tomorrow.

—FLOYD D. LOOP, M.D.
January 5, 2004
section one

THE EARLY YEARS