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The Entrepreneurial MD: Fostering Acts of Radical Creativity in Medicine

Announcer:

You are listening to Your Career in Health Care on ReachMD, the channel for medical professionals. Your Career in Health Care is powered by PhysicianJobsNationwide.com as part of the HealthJobsNationwide.com Network. Your host is Tim Rush, President and Founder of PhysicianJobsNationwide.com and the HealthJobsNationwide.com Network.

Tim Rush:

Have you had the opportunity of practicing medicine in Zimbabwe or running a small community hospital? How about running your own successful business? Well, our next guest has done all of this and much more. Dr. Philippa Kennealy is President of The Entrepreneurial MD. As a certified physician development coach she works with physicians who are striving to become entrepreneurs and to build their own successful business or thriving practice. This is ReachMD, and I'm your host Tim Rush. Dr. Kennealy, welcome to the show.

Dr. Philippa Kennealy:

Thank you so much. I'm delighted to be here.

Tim Rush:

I had an opportunity to look over your website and all of the information and tools that you have to offer other physicians and clinicians. I'm really excited about having some time to spend with you. I'd like to get started right away with you telling our guests a little bit about your career in health care. Tell us about your medical career.

Dr. Philippa Kennealy:

Well yes, I'd be happy to talk about it. Just be prepared for a rollercoaster ride because it's a very circuitous career. As you might have guessed, I was not born in this country, I was actually born in South Africa and trained as a physician there, and did some postgraduate training although we didn't have formal residencies in those times. And at some point had the opportunity, I was actually invited to go and work in the newly independent country of Zimbabwe. I had only done a rotation when it was still Rhodesia, and I guess people still remembered me in the small coal mining town.

And so I was asked if I would go up and practice medicine, support what was actually a large thermal power station that was being built. And they needed a doctor, so I was asked if I would be the company doctor and in addition have a private practice, which was exciting experience because there were no private practitioners for 300 miles in that area. And so I did this and reluctantly after three years realized that I probably needed to get on with my life and not stay in this little mud hole.

So I returned to South Africa at a little bit of a loss as to what to do, and then for personal reasons came on a vacation to the United States, fell in love, and decided to stay, which meant that I then had to do a residency again. And at that point I chose to do a residency in family medicine, graduated and went on to my own practice, well, to join an existing practice but be my own practitioner within this practice in Santa Monica, and I did that for about, I guess it was by the eighth year that I was starting to feel pretty burned out.

We were in the height of HMO medicine at the time in Southern California, and I was really very unhappy with the way we were having to practice. And so I started looking around, and felt that it would be important to do a little bit of I guess further education. And a brand-new executive MPH was opening at UCLA so I did that, and midway through the course of that I had the opportunity to move out of clinical medicine into the role of VPMA, Vice President for Medical Affairs, so kind of Co-director at the hospital, which had recently become a community hospital acquired by UCLA.

So I did that for a couple of years, and when my boss left I was asked to step into the _____ (3:31) in the CEO role, and I did that for

another couple of years. In fact, it was a very fascinating and obviously a very challenging time. There was a lot going on within clinical medicine and within our community. But at the same time I was very, very fascinated by the Internet, because this was the height of the dot.com era, and I was intrigued by what was going on.

So when I was called one day and the recruiter was from a dot-com I jumped at it, and instantly went from the high bureaucracy of a community hospital affiliated with an academic medical center into a dot-com. And that was where I was exposed to this concept of coaching, which I had no idea about, and I was told that I was going to be responsible for the online coaching team. I sat down, got a bunch of books, read about it, thought, oh, well that'll be a fantastic retirement career one day, because I really do love that sort of intimate helping relationship.

And so unfortunately the dot-com bust happened shortly after that, and this wonderful project that I was involved with had to get shelved, and I went from the _____ (4:42) work for another company helping them with a sort of e-commerce project. And then I was twiddling my thumbs and thinking, okay, what's next? And it finally dawned on me that this was the time to do some more coaching. Back in 2002 I did normative research, I was actually pregnant at the time with my first and only child.

I did a little bit of research because I really didn't want to go back into clinical medicine. I did not want those hours, I did not want to be raising a child under those circumstances. And so I discovered that a really, really good coaching company was starting a training program in Los Angeles, which is where I live. So I trained and certified with this program back in 2002 and 2003, and for me the rest is history. I became a coach.

Within a fairly short time it became evident to me that the group of people that I most enjoyed working with were people like myself, physicians who were looking for some kind of professional development be that in the global entrepreneurial approach or be that a _____ (5:51) the way they did their practice, because I had very little _____ (5:54) when I was in practice, or getting into a whole advanced leadership role, which was something I was also comfortable with coaching. So that's it in a nutshell. I _____ (6:04) a very tortuous journey.

Tim Rush:

Now, based on that do you have any opportunities to pick up a stethoscope? Are you practicing at all at this time?

Dr. Philippa Kennealy:

No. I did some volunteer work for a while, but honestly for the amount of work I was doing I felt that my competence wasn't high enough to maintain my skill sets, and I felt that would not be to the public's best interest. So I think back in about 2004 or 2005 was the last time I actually practiced any real clinical medicine.

Tim Rush:

If you're just tuning in, you're listening to Your Career in Health Care on ReachMD. I'm your host Tim Rush, and joining me today is Dr. Philippa Kennealy. She's President of The Entrepreneurial MD. Obviously you got excited about the dot-com. Heck, I own several dot-com businesses, I was in health care recruiting, and like you was so excited about the unlimited opportunities on the Internet. So It's clear that that was one of your main transitional points, and then this certified physician development coach. Tell us a little bit more about how that happened, and then where you're going and what you're doing right now.

Dr. Philippa Kennealy:

Well, it happened, as I mentioned, in that it was clear that my natural fit was, my target audience, my target market, was physicians and health care professionals. And it was the group of people I understood best having been one myself, being married to one, having a large number of friends being physicians, and it was a very comfortable zone for me to be in. And I'd worked in the hospital environment, supposedly on the, open quotes, "other side of the fence," close quotes, as an administrator.

So I felt that I really understood many of the challenges that physicians are facing, and it's increasingly daunting. This is a really comfortable group of people for me to work with, so I actually did a little bit of extra training _____ (8:01), who has a program, and _____ (8:04). I also am ICF certified, International Coaching Federation certified. I felt it was important to have some credentials that physicians would feel comfortable with, because I think physicians in general are credential-conscious. It's how we choose each other in many ways as referral _____ (8:24).

Rim Rush:

Well, tell us about the mission of The Entrepreneurial MD.

Dr. Philippa Kennealy:

Well, the mission of The Entrepreneurial MD is really to help physicians become successful as rising entrepreneurs, and I use that word in a way that is not strictly about financial success. And for me being an entrepreneur has been my opportunity to experience what I call

an act of radical creativity. And the way I think about it is, in medicine we have to narrow our thinking quite a bit. We have to start with a patient for whom there could be many possibilities, and we have to narrow it down to one possibility as we go through our diagnostic process.

So we engage in very reductive thinking, and much of our work is what we might term very left-brain sort of cognitive. There is some art to it, but really it's mostly science and deductive thinking. And there are not many opportunities for us to be creative in a day. We don't get to wake up and say, "Oh, I'm going to invent a new surgery today" or, "Oh, I feel like just trying a whole new medicine for my patient today."

That's not the way we work. And so that part of our brain just wants to be creative and inventive and expansive, tends to lie dormant. And yet most of us still have it. And so the work I do with physicians is to in many ways highlight that part of the brain that they are missing, that they feel a craving for, that has gone dormant, and that they want to awaken and feel creative within their own businesses, whether it's clinical or nonclinical.

There really are many opportunities for creativity, particularly in this day and age where business models for hospitals and health care are being reinvented all the time. So whereas the practice of medicine might be reductive _____ (10:16) the business side of medicine has the opportunity to be enormously creative, and that's the piece that I like to focus on with my physician side.

Tim Rush:

Well, tell us some success stories.

Dr. Philippa Kennealy:

Well, I can think off the top of my head of several, and obviously I have to keep this as anonymous as possible, but I distinctly recall a _____ (10:37) severe depression about the fact that his specialty was not serving him well, and he was longing to do something else. And his biggest passion in life was around fitness and wellness and athleticism, and so he arrived at the decision that he was going to open his own fitness and wellness practice, and it was going to focus on to some extent weight management or just vitality and wellness and fitness.

And along the way he also discovered functional medicine and just went on training in that area, and has incorporated that, and has a thriving practice that _____ (11:22) he cares about. Because when I work with my clients, I work with them on _____ (11:28), they need to feel _____ (11:31) considering their passions and interests, their skills, talents, and abilities, and the particular _____ (11:36) that they prefer using. And then their marketability, what can you actually sell or do that people will pay you for that you love to do and are good at? _____ (11:47) keep those three things in mind. So this could be an example.

Another example on a slightly difference track would be a physician came to me again deeply unhappy in her specialty and really eager to get out of physical medicine _____ (12:04). She was very clear in her plans. She wanted to move out of her specialty and was willing to sort of start at the bottom of the heap in a corporate environment. She did not want to start her own business. She wanted to go through the process of acquiring a job and landing a job in an environment that had a lifestyle that would appeal to her.

And so we did that, and to her credit within her nine-month period she worked very hard, we worked together. I taught her how to network, I taught her how to do the sort of research that's necessary to pinpoint the job. Because the jobs physicians are looking for are not the things that are posted on the job board because these are jobs that you're going to target and secure for yourself through your own networking strategy.

Because the high-paid jobs that physicians are looking for are really not posted on a regular basis. So she did that, she targeted the company she wanted to work for, she reached out, she networked, she made the connection, and within her nine-month period of time she was hired in exactly the position she wanted, and it was a resounding success from her point of view.

She was really, really satisfied and she had closed down her obligations within her practice, she'd met all the needs of the practice including the financial obligations. She targeted where she wanted to live in the country, as well. She also moved with her family to the area that she wanted to move to, so it was a very specific clear goal that she set and that we worked together to accomplish.

Tim Rush:

Well, what advice would you give other physicians or care providers that are looking at getting into a new career opportunity or business adventure?

Dr. Philippa Kennealy:

The first piece of advice I would give is _____ (13:52) to know yourself, and to know yourself on a deeper level than we usually know ourselves. Have a clear sense of vision, sense of purpose, and core values. They're very important tools. Without those as tools any decisions you make you'll run the risk of being just repetitions of the same mistakes.

Because when you make decisions that are not aligned with those things, your vision, your sense of purpose, or your core values we know that you're going to head towards some negative state of being, whether it's numbness, anxiety, frustration, anger, _____ (14:35). Whereas when you make choices that are more closely aligned with what deeply matters to you and lies inside you we also know just factually that _____ (14:46) satisfaction.

So the really important starting point is, find a way to really know yourself, because there are lots of ways to do that. There's lots of good books that help you uncover yourself. One of my favorite books is called Find Your Own North Star by Martha Beck that takes you on a journey. There are lots of exercises. You have to be willing to do the work. That involves work. _____ (15:12) I think is the part of us that also engages in a lot of wishful thinking _____ (15:18) the next opportunity will kind of show up, and it really doesn't. It does involve a lot of work.

Tim Rush:
Absolutely.

Dr. Philippa Kennealy:

The second step is to begin to figure out whether you're an introvert or an extravert. How is it that you're going to find the information that you need, _____ (15:38) and that next step of figuring out how to network. Figuring out how to meet people on the Web, figuring out how to _____ (15:54), figuring out who are those that help you through this process. It does not have to be _____ (15:59) work. But there are lots of resources, mentors, someone else _____ (16:06).

Many of my clients have found great success in aligning with someone in an industry completely outside of medicine. _____ (16:14) thinking of one person who was interested in financial _____ (16:22). And so he aligned himself with focus in finances. He really began to network within _____ (16:29). Find ways to be a member of the kinds of societies that they belong to. And also think of this as a process, not an instantaneous thing. You're not going to work this out instantly. It is a process.

Tim Rush:
Well Dr. Kennealy, we have run out of time unfortunately. How can our listeners contact you?

Dr. Philippa Kennealy:

Well, probably the best way to do so would be through my website which is The Entrepreneurial MD, and the URL for that is entrepreneurialmd.com. I'll spell that, it's e-n-t-r-e-p-r-e-n-e-u-r-i-a-l-m-d.com. They can just Google my name, Philippa Kennealy, and my website will pop up very handily. I have an enormous amount of free content on there which obviously has been helpful in having my website be found _____ (17:26).

Tim Rush:

Well, thanks for being our guest, Dr. Philippa Kennealy, President of Entrepreneurial MD. I'm your host Tim Rush. Thanks for listening.

Announcer:

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