



# Lessons Learned



Between sticky ribs and spicy BBQ sauce, I mingled with the future generation of doctors at the annual AAFP Residents and Students Conference in Kansas City. I was reminded of several very important things:

- I am old
- I *didn't* just finish my residency
- I need to get a "MySpace" account and learn how to "IM."

In addition to my mini-mid-life crisis, my booth was dead. I was sure there would be crowds of people interested in urgent care and options for additional training. What was I doing wrong?

I decided to leave my booth and walk around a bit to see what other exhibitors were doing to attract people to their booth. The tricks of the trade: free food and other seemingly "worthless" giveaways. Everything from kielbasa and roasted almonds to stopwatches, stuffed animals, and mini lava lamps. There was even a booth that brought their own "Wii" video game for the students to play.

How could a crowd of "academics" stoop so low just to dupe some "unsuspecting" students to visit their booth?

### Know Your Audience

Knowing there must be a lesson in all this, I retreated to my lonely booth, barren of popcorn, a dartboard or gleaming Harley Davidson (yes, a family medicine residency from Wisconsin shipped one in—and yes, they had a very busy booth).

What I realized is a lesson I have preached to the students, residents, and fellows repeatedly: Know your audience.

Whether you are giving a lecture or talking with a patient, the first key to success is to know your audience. Understand their needs, their agenda, their language, and their cultural background.

The two features of daily life most lacking for a resident or med student are fun and money. Hence the free stuff and video games. Merely a simple technique to attract visitors to your booth. Everyone knows it and everyone accepts it. A cultural norm with no apologies necessary.

You give me food and a free neck massage and I'll listen about your program.

In the end, an exchange of real information takes place, and you get several grateful, interested candidates.

The rest of the show, I hung out at the "cool" booths and met dozens of residents interested in urgent care and fellowship training.

Please submit your ideas for booth attractions for next year's conference to [editor@jujm.com](mailto:editor@jujm.com).

BFN (bye for now).

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### Join the Discussion

You'll note on page 8 of this month's issue of *JUCM* that we've begun publishing Letters to the Editor. If you have questions on an article you've read here, thoughts about the state of urgent care in general—or, as Dr. Resnick suggested, ideas on how to draw attention to the UCAOA booth at conferences—share them with us (and, by extension, with your colleagues) in an e-mail to [editor@jujm.com](mailto:editor@jujm.com).

Whenever possible and appropriate, we will reply or seek out a reply from an authoritative party—in this case Dr. Kent Knauer, author of the lead clinical article in our July/August issue.