

## **Maximizing Your High Biological Value**

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High biological value (HBV) is a term we all know. We first learned about high biological value and protein metabolism in basic nutrition. We have applied the concept of high biological value with our renal patients in an effort to maximize the power of protein in their diets. But, in the process, have you maximized your own biological value? The goal of this brief inspirational message is to foster critical thinking and encourage your own self-evaluation of your professional worth: your own high biological value.

The definition of high biological value is simple: the measure of the amount of essential amino acids compared to the amount of total protein or amino acids consumed. In our patients, we talk about using at least 70% or more high biological value to improve their ability to use the limited amount of protein they can consume. In short, we try to get the most value for our effort – or “the most bang for my buck” in the words of one of my patients. The food that is highest on the list is the egg. I use the acronym, EGG, to represent Energy Going Great. When we are using the highest level of biological value in our practice, our energy is going great! We can handle it all. We can accomplish our workload with ease. We are on the top of our game!

### **Measuring Your Worth**

How do we measure our own biological value? You should be able to get a clearer picture and measure of your own worth using a self-reflection exercise. Table 1 poses a series of questions in a checklist format that you should ask yourself. The checklist is by no means inclusive, and in fact, you are encouraged to customize the checklist to your own individual work environment. Discuss the answers with a co-worker or supervisor to get their objective perspective as well. The goal of this exercise is to evaluate where you are in the process of worth and discover pathways to greater worth. Most of us are responsible for many tasks in our current job situation but in reality, get credit for only a small percentage of what we actually do. Personally, I did research for several years early in my renal nutrition career without even a simple acknowledgement in the manuscripts that were subsequently published. I had to make the decision to ask for recognition of my worth or stop doing what I was doing (even though I loved it). This is an essential part of the worth cycle: defining what we do and putting a “cost” or worth on each skill or talent we deliver.

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### **Defining Your Worth**

After you measure your worth, you need to create a visual measure and definition of your worth. One way to define your professional high biological value or worth is to create a curriculum vitae or CV. The CV differs from a resume. A resume format is used to look for employment and focuses on your job history. A CV takes the resume format and expands it to represent your entire career history. The CV is an evolving, growing file of your “worth”. Table 2 lists the essential components of a CV. Ask for copies of CV’s from your mentors, supervisors, peers, DPG officers. I would be happy to share a copy by email with you.

In addition, continue your professional worth history by:

- An ongoing list of all presentations you give by date, audience, location, and title.
- Maintain a portfolio of projects you have done. Years later, you will have examples of all your professional work.
- Assemble a file of recommendation letters from your current and past employers. They may be hard to track down in the future but you will have a complete file documenting your worth when you need it.
- Keep a reprint copy of all your publications.

### **Going Forward**

Defining worth is an on-going process that involves personal goals as well. Each year write a personal goal statement. You don’t have to share it with anyone but yourself. Research shows that people who do not have goals are more likely to be depressed because they cannot measure their progress over time. People who create unattainable goals are consumed with disappointment. Therefore, writing a goal statement requires the combination of careful thought, reality check, and a dose of inspiration. You must let your goals evolve with life experiences. Update your goals over time as you consider your changing priorities and resources.

Everyone should have a “pride” list. Experts suggest that it isn’t what has happened in life but rather how you perceive life happened to you. There is no objective way to measure what you have done or what you are doing, certainly this provides inspiration to get up each day. They may be simple acts of kindness or high outlays of time – but they have produced a sense of satisfaction that needs to be recognized. Maintain a collection of writings or sayings that inspire you. There are numerous resources to help keeping chronic employment and education exciting.

How do we increase our worth? We can take on responsibilities that are tied to outcome and link our worth.

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- Agree to take on responsibility for increasing a defined albumin parameter (ownership). Create a protocol with a budget for money to cover responsibility (action). Set measures and timeline with reimbursement incentives tied to performance (outcome measure). Link increases in albumin to decreased hospitalization or mortality events. Each event a patient from your unit for treatment and deducts billable dialysis treatment from your unit's income (cost savings). Translate cost savings into higher reimbursement for your worth and continued ownership of this responsibility.
- Evaluate your current responsibilities in relationship to your time allotment and priorities. Delete "assumed ownership" of projects and responsibilities you are not receiving recognition or worth. Re-negotiate new ownership with the tools, time, and worth in place. Realize there may be a period of denial on the part of others regarding your ownership status and worth.
- Look within your own renal community or corporation for a common problem. Work within your support system to develop a solution that may improve the worth of a cohort of dietitians or team members, not just yourself. "Selling" the solution to a larger audience may provide synergy that is unavailable to you at present as a single entity.
- Increase your knowledge base: Become proficient in an area you can parlay into a greater worth such as the physiological compensation mechanism of the chronic kidney disease gut. Use your new understanding to develop new problem-solving solutions for phosphorus and potassium management.
- Increase your earning worth by expansion of your billable skills. Take a statistics course and learn a software program to support research analysis. Become proficient in new skills such as physician's assistant, certificates in motivational interviewing, or management skills.

## Facing the Future

We can't always have EGG (energy going great)! Chronic education can make us chronically numb. We can let our high biological value drop – we can burnout – we can replace the EGG with BACON (bad attitude creating overwhelming numbness)! What can we do? I have been called the eternal optimist, but I believe most of my efforts, when pursued with integrity and passion, result in increased worth. I would encourage you to measure your worth, whatever that would currently be, as a beginning of an on-going conversation and effort to keep improving our worth. We need to define our worth so it is apparent to others, not only to ourselves. Maximize your high biological value! You are worth it!

Suggested references:

- 1) Niven D. *The 100 Simple Secrets of Happy People: What Scientists Have Learned and How You Can Use It*. New York: Harper Collins, 2000
- 2) <http://obsearch.about.com/cs/curriculumvitae>  
Accessed May 1, 2006

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**Table 1: Your Biological Value Checklist**

### Category: Team Biological Value

Question	
Are you missed when you are not there?	
Are you an indispensable member of the team?	
Do you perform functions that no other team member is primarily responsible for?	
Do you generate essential reports?	
Do you require physical coverage of another person when you are away?	
Are you functioning at a level where your activities and work is central to the operation of your unit? And more importantly, does anyone know this besides you?	
Is your name connected to these activities on each report heading, in your job description, in your monthly activity log of work?	
Do you have the same level of worth with all personnel, all shifts?	

### Category: Patient Biological Value

Question	
Do patients ask for you by name (not just "the dietitian")?	
Do patients make appointments to see you (and keep them)?	
Do you know all your patients by name (and call them by name)?	
Is your day tightly or randomly scheduled?	
Are you a central part of your patients' education and treatment plan?	
Do patients look forward to seeing you because you provide a valued service or do they pretend to be in a deep sleep when you pass by?	
Do patients consider you an expert in your field (and maybe other fields as well, like bone management) or are they addressing their questions to others?	
Do you have the same level of worth on all shifts of patients?	

**Table 2: Essential Components of Your Curriculum Vitae**

- Name, degrees, contact information
- Education (degrees, certificates, licenses)
- Present Professional Endeavors (Title, employment, dates)
- Present Volunteer Endeavors
- Past Professional Endeavors
- Current Professional Memberships (include leadership roles)
- Publications (abstracts, book chapters, articles)
- Grants Received (include funded or unfunded research in progress)
- Date and paginate