

## What I'm Reading (Aug. 23)



By Chuck Dinerstein, MD, MBA — August 22, 2019



Courtesy of Sasin Tipchai from Pixabay

[1]

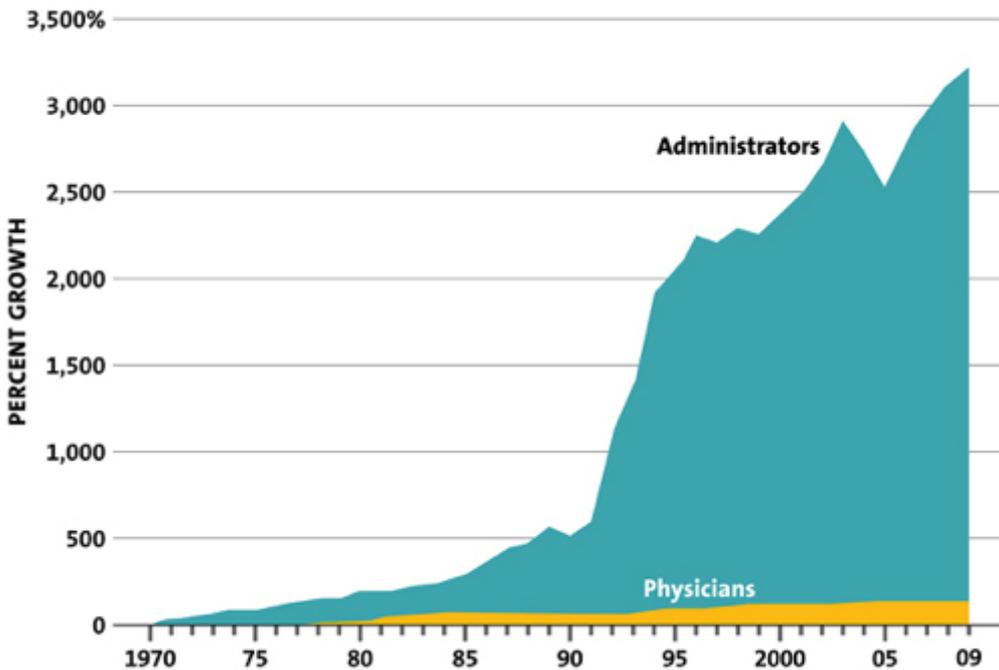
*“First, you (and me) are probably not that good at most tasks. One should recognize that our performance perceptions are upwardly biased. Thus, it pays to be humble and learn as much as possible from others.”*

Here’s the thing, we all think we are better at a given activity than others – everyone is “better than average,” but of course, that is statistically impossible. It turns out that the less skilled are frequently clueless about their situation. And there is a name for this bias; it is the Dunning Kreuger effect, [here](#) [2] is a quick 3-minute read. For those of you interested in a deeper dive, may I humbly suggest “In Defense of Ignorance,” a classic from Ira Glass and This American Life, a podcast gem. Specifically, [Act 2](#) [3], although the entire episode is excellent, the first act deals with the benefits of not telling a patient they have only months to live, the third, a group of individuals than cannot forget anything.

*“While it is not possible to compare the toxicity of all natural and synthetic chemicals, it is worth noting that the five most toxic chemicals on Earth are all naturally found. When it comes to pesticides, some of the newer man-made versions are remarkably safe to humans; and at high doses, these pesticides are as toxic as table salt and aspirin.”*

This may be a bit of a busman’s holiday for our readers. From Aeon, a 10-minute read, Why synthetic chemicals seem more toxic than natural ones? Separating science fact from science fiction can be tough, especially when the science is complex.

## GROWTH IN PHYSICIANS AND ADMINISTRATORS



SOURCE: Bureau of Labor Statistics; NCHS; Himmelstein/Woolhandler analysis of CPS

Have you seen this graph? It shows the growth in the number of physicians versus the number of administrators. It is making the medical rounds because, one of the banes of physician existence are those pesky administrators who know all and do little, except raise the cost of care. I so wish the graph was correct; it agrees with all my biases. Unfortunately, it involves combining apples and oranges. Here is the [takedown](#) [4], from Marginal Revolution, six-minute read.

And by the way, administrators do add unnecessary costs.

*“Science requires us to have the courage to let our beautiful theories die public deaths at the hands of ugly facts. ... science requires us to go where the facts lead us. If only journals like Science were willing to lead the way.”*

Replication of prior work is part of the scientific method and has become a bit of a buzzword in the softer sciences. Slate brings us the tale of a group of scientists who failed to replicate a classic study in Science, and their report was not even offered an opportunity for peer-review. Conflicts of interest can take many forms, including editorial decisions. [“We Tried to Publish a Replication of a Science Paper in Science. The Journal Refused.”](#) [5] an 8-minute read.

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### Links

[1] <https://pixabay.com/photos/book-asia-children-boys-education-1822474/>

[2] <https://www.healthcare-economist.com/2019/08/20/how-good-are-you-at-x/>

[3] <https://www.thisamericanlife.org/585/in-defense-of-ignorance/act-two-6>

[4] <https://marginalrevolution.com/marginalrevolution/2019/08/are-health-administrators-to-blame.html>

[5] [https://slate.com/technology/2019/06/science-replication-conservatives-liberals-reacting-to-threats.html?utm\\_source=STAT+Newsletters&utm\\_campaign=dcd9734fe3-](https://slate.com/technology/2019/06/science-replication-conservatives-liberals-reacting-to-threats.html?utm_source=STAT+Newsletters&utm_campaign=dcd9734fe3-)

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