

# YOU HAVE INFLUENCE

## LEADERSHIP URGENCY IN THE NHS—QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

*Dr John Greenall, CMF Associate CEO and Paediatrician  
Dr Sunil Raheja, Psychiatrist and Coach in Private Practice*

When did you last have a sense of urgency? The COVID pandemic has drawn a lot of debate over vaccination policies. But one thing is for sure – there was an urgency in the development of (now multiple) vaccines to counter the disease.

For many of us in our leadership we see obstacles and challenges that are urgent, and yet can struggle to approach them. You see that discharges are being delayed because staff aren't completing discharge summaries, leading to capacity issues. Or more seriously, you spot a disturbing pattern in mortality rates on one of your wards and you know you need to act fast. Behind the scenes it is just as tough. You sense urgency as you approach a key meeting, but not about making time for thinking or the steps to get you there. You sense urgency when you need to hit a financial target, but not about lead measures that make it possible. Perhaps you are urgent about work, but not about rest to stave off pending burnout.

This year's [Global Leadership Summit – Health](#) is an opportunity for aspiring and current healthcare leaders to gather, to enjoy world-class leadership teaching and to apply it to our lives - both personal and professional.

One session led by Malcolm Gladwell is titled '[The Urgency of a Leader](#)' where he describes the remarkable achievement of haematologist Dr Emil Freireich. In the 1950s his children's ward at the National Cancer Institute of Bethesda was full of children dying from leukaemia in horrendous pain with uncontrollable symptoms. His brilliant insights led to the modern-day success story of how we treat this disease, but it came with great risk. Gladwell details both the operational and the social risk of acting with such urgency. One risks being criticised. One must overcome opposition. One might even risk

one's career. Gladwell concludes: 'Freireich is in a hurry. He has 10 kids on ward who will be dead in 6 weeks. He sees risks and benefits differently. He is willing to stick his neck out and take risks because of the urgency. Social risk-taking is what leaders HAVE to do.'

At this year's [Health Summit](#) we will consider what are the urgent things we see around us? What social risks are we willing to take as leaders? What does it mean in the day-in day-out of our work to be innovative risk-takers? And we will discover that whilst it was Freireich who takes the headlines, it was a lesser-known senior leader who made his organisation safer for risk-taking.

If you're feeling the weight of pressure as a health professional, you're not alone. Leadership is hard at the best of times—and these are far from the best of times: COVID-19 is having a huge impact on our healthcare system; we're facing a massive mobilisation of the NHS to address the challenges; we're constantly up against limited resources as we seek reorganise; we face potential overload on a daily basis; the urgent needs can overwhelm us, and the urgency of our response dulled by the volume of work and the system we work in.

Join us online to consider this topic, share with one another and be inspired by others on Saturday 26th March 2022. To find out more and register click [HERE](#).

---

### Commendations from our GLS Health 2021 edition:

*"Fantastic meeting that was relevant to how I lead in all aspects of my life. Breakout groups provided a great opportunity to consolidate the session and learn from others." Deji Jaiyesimi*

*"Great GLS! Well organised online event with welcoming breakout rooms. Very encouraging and inspiring leadership talks. Took away plenty of golden nuggets to help me to grow and lead." Amanda Mackinnon*

*"This is such an energising seminar to attend! I stayed awake after a night shift and I really relished the experience." Nyasha Mudondo*