

An SEP is something we can't see, or don't see, or our brain doesn't let us see, because we think that it's somebody else's problem. That's what SEP means. Somebody Else's Problem. The brain just edits it out, it's like a blind spot.

—Douglas Adams, in *Life, the Universe, and Everything*

Queue Anxiety (Somebody Else's Problem)

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Queue anxiety. This particular form mostly strikes division directors, chairs, and those of us who are not yet accustomed to the “shift work” paradigm of so many modern radiology departments.

I guess you know what I mean, but let us set the stage: Outpatient venue. You sit down to read, coffee in hand, power up, and are greeted with the worklist.

The worklist.

You and your colleagues hit it. You dictate, you talk to clinicians and patients, nurses, an occasional administrative type, and to your colleagues. The scanners are busy; work is getting cranked out and more CTs, MRs, and other studies hit that list, and it is ... *a battle royale.*

The list wants to flourish, to be fruitful and multiply and divide. You want to kill it.

It's growing! Someone went to lunch/a conference/a dentist's appointment.

It's shrinking! Someone got back/the late person came in/the residents went to a conference.

Sometimes, the list grows in a dramatic fashion. How cranked do you get when the techs forget to finalize 5-10 studies, and then do them all at once? *Whutttt!?* I'm sure it has shortened my life.

But the worst anxiety for me is the growth at the end of the day. You've been keeping up. The list was stable. But then, the end of the day starts to appear, and the list is growing. Whoa, growing a lot. *Damn, how did we get 30 studies behind?*

And there you are, imagining several things.

First, your next day. *Do I really want to come in tomorrow 50-60 back?* Next, you're thinking about your colleagues. *Will they think I'm slacking off? Will something that needs attention go unaddressed for the day?*

The movement to shift work is an odd one, I'll just state for the public record. But, with the young 'uns being schooled in this fashion, it's worth thinking about the queue issue. So, your shift is ending, and the list has exploded; this has just become, to borrow from Douglas Adams, somebody else's problem, or an SEP. Go ahead. Ask me how I feel about this.

Go ahead. I dare you.

Okay. You asked.

I don't get it. Seems a bit unusual for me to look at an expanding list and just pack up and go home. But, if the big hand on Mickey points to the ceiling and his little hand is on the 5, I am free to go. For the first 30 years of my career, that expanding list would have been the indication that the planned events for the evening are going to happen without me, and it looks like take-out for dinner again.

But times have changed. Hey, maybe this is all good. Maybe handing that list off to someone else is a good idea. Yeah ...sure. I'll just have a larger list tomorrow.

Keep doing that good work. Mahalo.