

# Driving South from Williamsport Gratitude, Conviction, and the Courage to Speak



*Jeffrey E. Hansen, PhD*

## **A Full Heart and the Cost of Speaking**

As I drive south out of Williamsport, my heart is full. And I mean that in the deepest sense. Not a passing sentiment. Not a polite phrase. A full heart. Gratitude. Conviction. A renewed sense that what we are doing matters, even when it comes at a cost.

I have taken hits over the years. Real ones. Speaking openly about the perils of misaligned psychotherapy, the overuse and at times careless use of psychotropic medications, and the ideological capture of parts of my profession is not without consequence. There have been criticisms, mischaracterizations, calls for my license, and personal allegations that go far beyond professional disagreement. That is the cost of speaking when others would prefer silence.

And yet, as I leave Williamsport, I can say without hesitation, it is worth it.

## A Rare Kind of Physician and a Courageous Community

This week, I had the honor of returning to speak at a medical conference hosted by **Dr. Russell Gombosi**. Dr. Gombosi is a rare physician in today's system, triple board-certified in internal medicine, pediatrics, and sleep medicine, providing truly comprehensive care across the lifespan while holding fast to a Christ-centered model of medicine that sees the patient as more than a diagnosis.

There is also something more that is difficult to fully capture unless you have been in his presence. He is a man of quiet stature, the kind you recognize not by title but by presence. There is a moral courage about him that does not need to announce itself. You feel it. And yet, at the very same time, he has a way of putting people at ease, of making you feel comfortable in your own skin. There is a genuine kindness, a steadiness, a compassion that reflects not just what he believes, but how he lives. He could retire. He has done well. He has earned that right. But he does not. Not out of need. Not out of ambition. But out of a deep sense of calling, of mission, of service to others. That is the kind of physician he is. And that, in many ways, says more than any credential ever could.



But more than titles and credentials, he is something increasingly rare in modern medicine. He is a man who values freedom of thought. Freedom of speech. The First Amendment not as an abstract principle, but as something to be lived and protected, especially in a field that is increasingly pressured to conform.

To be invited back for a second time was deeply meaningful. Last year was powerful. This year, even more so. I was asked to speak on risk-taking and resilience in youth, a topic that sits at the very heart of what is happening in our culture. We are watching a generation struggle, not because they are weak, but because they are being shaped by forces that undermine resilience while calling it progress.

Following a strong and thoughtful lecture by **Dr. Michelle Cretella**, former president of the American College of Pediatricians, the conversation continued into territory that many in medicine are increasingly hesitant to enter. She spoke clearly about the risks associated with early sexual behavior and made the case for sexual risk avoidance rather than the dominant harm-reduction framework. It was not a fashionable message. It was not designed to please. It was designed to say what she believes is true.

And that mattered.

Because what is happening in medicine right now cannot be ignored. Across the country, physicians are being squeezed into narrower and narrower lanes. Fifteen-minute visits. Metrics tied to reimbursement. Expectations around prescribing, documentation, and compliance that leave less and less room for clinical judgment, for presence, for actually knowing the patient sitting in front of you.

There is an increasing sense that medicine is no longer being shaped from within, but from above. Protocols over wisdom. Throughput over relationship. Incentives over discernment. Even in places like Williamsport, which could be described as more conservative and grounded, those pressures are present. This is not isolated. It is systemic.

And yet, what I saw there was something different.

I saw a community of physicians who are still thinking. Still questioning. Still willing to engage ideas rather than simply inherit them. I saw people who are not ready to hand over their profession to ideology, regardless of where that ideology comes from.

I also experienced something that is too often lost in modern medicine: genuine hospitality and human connection. Time spent with Dr. Gombosi and his gracious wife, **Juliann**, was not peripheral to the experience. It was central to it. Because at its core, medicine is relational. It always has been. Strip that away, and something essential is lost.

### **Truth, Faith, and the Road Ahead**

There is also a deeper anchor for me in all of this. As a Christian, I cannot separate truth from the One who embodies it. Jesus Christ did not bend to cultural pressure, did not remain silent when truth was inconvenient, and did not prioritize acceptance over integrity. He spoke with clarity, with compassion, and with unwavering conviction, even when it cost Him everything. To

**Driving South from Williamsport: Gratitude, Conviction, and the Courage to Speak**  
- Jeffrey E. Hansen, Ph.D.

follow that model, to drive down the oftentimes lonely road, is not always comfortable, and it is certainly not always rewarded. At least initially. But it is right. And in a time when both medicine and psychology are increasingly shaped by external pressures, that example matters more than ever.



So yes, as I drive south, my heart is full.

Full of gratitude for the invitation.  
Full of respect for the courage I witnessed.  
Full of renewed conviction that speaking clearly, even when it is costly, is still the right thing to do.

There are still physicians and allied providers in this country who have not lost their way. There are still men and women willing to stand in the tension between truth and consequence, between integrity and approval, and choose rightly. Not perfectly, but faithfully.

And that gives me hope.

Not a shallow or fleeting optimism, but a grounded hope. A hope rooted in the reality that truth does not disappear simply because it is resisted, and that courage, when lived out consistently, has a way of multiplying itself in others.

As Scripture reminds us, *“Let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.”* (Galatians 6:9)

So, the road ahead may not be easy. It may, at times, feel isolating. But it is still worth traveling.

Because truth still matters.

Because integrity still matters.

And because, even now, there are those who are willing to stand.