Out of Hours Event

IMAGINING THE FUTURE OF MEDICINE HOSTED BY DARA Ó BRIAIN

The Royal Albert Hall, London

Monday 21 April 2014

This event, hosted by comedian Dara Ó Briain, offered a series of provocative short talks and performances exploring the future of medical innovation. Through the use of music, art, and theatre we were encouraged to 'think outside the box' and imagine what health care could be like for our grandchildren.

Much of the afternoon was dedicated to advances in medical technology. Special guest Jay Walker, curator of the TEDMED conferences, showed us a future looking more like science fiction than science fact as we know it today. In his vision of 'Civilisation 2.0', synthetic biologists would engineer chromosomes with any function we desire, cancer would be detected and destroyed at its earliest stage, and legions of ingested sensors would monitor our biomarkers to alert us to imminent disease. The data, naturally, would be relayed and interpreted by apps on our mobile phones, which would also serve as 'symptom-checkers' and contain our medical records. And we thought Skype consultations sounded high-tech ...

But what of the art of medicine? How can we deliver the 'doctor as a drug' via an app? The future evoked seemed shockingly stark of human interaction, and at times the event verged on becoming an advert for the technology itself (the app in question was available to download after the event).

Dara Ó Briain & Ali Parsa | Imagining the Future of Medicine. Royal Albert Hall.

Thankfully, however, the technobabble was tempered by engaging talks from clinicians highlighting the importance of providing good health care within the evolving health service. In her talk 'How to have a good death', palliative care doctor Katherine Sleeman emphasised how 'conversation and care can be more powerful than technology', while neurosurgeon Mark Wilson discussed the value of 'caring for patients over caring for targets'. These, together with fascinating discussions about the adolescent mind and the use of music in medicine, made for a thoroughly engaging afternoon.

All interactions in modern society are becoming increasingly virtual, yet today's

patients are crying out more and more for the personal touch when it comes to health care. Advances in medical technology must complement, not compromise, the delicate doctor-patient relationship, or else we may risk losing the heart of medicine itself.

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Imagining the Future of Medicine can be viewed online:

<http://life.royalalberthall.com/2014/06/11/imagining-the-future-of-medicine-watch-the-full-event/>

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