



YORK MEDICAL SOCIETY

York Medical Society Festive Newsletter

When I was a houseman I spent half the year in Barts and half the year in Halifax and the social support provided by the hospitals was huge. In Halifax, aside from a doctors' mess, there was a vibrant multidisciplinary social club, tennis courts on the hospital site for all staff to use and a theatre which various staff groups put shows on several times a year, including a Christmas show. When I worked at Highroyds Hospital as a junior doctor the patients who all had moderate to severe mental health problems could enrol in an industrial training unit, a kitchen garden, access to indoor badminton, a full sized snooker table and a football pitch and cricket pitch they could use. Care was holistic. The role of hospitals in providing holistic support to either patients or staff has greatly changed over the years especially since government changes to focus on funding and a lack of understanding in the commissioning of services about the importance of emotional, psychological, social and spiritual well-being in the lives of people, and how these impact upon physical health. So as we enter the festive season we see more and more the value of the medical society in providing networking, support and social contact. Our medical colleagues often say they have little time for these things, but they are crucial to avoid burnout and we have a role in championing their importance. We now train medical students to carefully consider and construct balanced lifestyles.

York Medical Society meetings have adapted to the evolving pandemic. We have kept meetings alive but safe. This has included regular Zoom pilates sessions, family walks, tours, life skills art classes, wine tasting and wreath making as well as some excellent meetings.

I am writing this as we prepare for our charity festive choral night. We are very pleased to be welcoming two choirs with several people in the medical and allied professions in their number. Mixed Blessings and Celebration Singers will be singing for us. We have avoided cancelling the evening by restricting numbers, making the concert available on Zoom and having some strict rules around masks, distancing, ventilation, vaccination and testing requirements. We have everyone's safety at heart but would also like to bring some joy to people's lives as we enter the festive season. The choral evening has also been made available for local care and nursing homes to access.

In our talks we have heard of the great sadness and joy of a day in the life of Martin House Children's Hospice from their Chief Medical Officer Dr Michelle Hills and it is apt that one of our three supported charities this year is the children's hospice. Michelle gave us many wonderful examples of ways in which physical cares are conjoined with social, emotional and family caring, including supporting diversity in all its forms. Please give generously as Christmas is an important time for families who have children with life limiting illnesses. Our other two charities this year are Young Minds, at a time when youth mental health is being rightly considered more and more in society, and Medecins Sans Frontieres, apt given the huge inequalities facing low and middle income countries around the world.

Other excellent recent talks we have had include our oration from Dr Heather Bonney, a forensic archaeologist who gave a fascinating exposition of the analysis of the remains of historical figures including Richard III. We heard from Prof Malcolm Alison about the promises and disappointments of stem cell research. Most recently we had a superb talk from the world leading expert Prof Chris Stringer about recent advances in our understanding of human evolution. Chris outlined recent genetic, dental and archaeological discovery and research. It was very well attended with 70 booking in on Zoom and we received many emails saying what a fascinating evening it had been.

We are looking forward to the Burns Supper on 29th January and will follow strict guidance for safety that evening. This will be held in the beautiful surroundings of the Merchant Taylor's Hall on Aldwark in York. Please do book early if you are coming along.

We continue to support doctors at all levels of training. On 14th January we have an evening where medical students whom we have supported, present brief summaries of their elective placements. Many of these were rearranged in the context of Covid so we have some interesting and innovative presentations of how students are adjusting to life in a pandemic. We also have our junior doctors Founders prize research presentations on March 4th with a prize of £250 to the winner presented on the night. On February 11th Dr Anna Bachelor who has spent 40 years in intensive care medicine will describe the ever-changing world of intensive medicine and especially the huge challenges faced in Covid times.

So with that, I and all the staff and Board of the York Medical Society would like to wish you a wonderful and peaceful festive period.

Prof Barry Wright

President of the York Medical Society

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