

# The insightful talk at College on “The future of Family Medicine from a NHS perspective”, by HMDP visiting expert Prof Jeremy Dale

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On the 18<sup>th</sup> of January 2017 evening, the College of Family Physicians Singapore had the pleasure of hosting a talk by Professor Jeremy Dale on “The Future of Family Medicine from a NHS perspective”. He was here in Singapore as a Health Manpower Development Plan (HMDP) visiting expert in Integrated Diabetes Care hosted by both Changi General Hospital and Sengkang Health @ Alexandra Hospital Family Medicine Department from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> of January 2017.

Indeed as an eminent academic and researcher from the University of Warwick, where he holds the position of Professor of Primary Care at Warwick, he is well qualified to share his experience on this issue. He is also a part-time GP with the Engleton House Surgery in Coventry which is the busiest practice in that city, and hence he is well aware of the ground situation. He shared how NHS was facing up to the tough budgetary constraints by utilising various innovations and programmes to overcome these financial challenges, as well as some of the key messages below.



Professor Jeremy Dale at College

The role of Family Physicians in the hospital and community interface and how they can pick up the mantle for:

- Strengthened foundation of integrated, community based generalist care.
- Integration of generalist and specialist in the both the community and hospital settings.
- Assuming roles that were previously performed by their specialist colleagues through enhanced and extended training opportunities.
- Management of patients in the emergency department and facilitating discharge planning in the hospitals. (Figure 1)

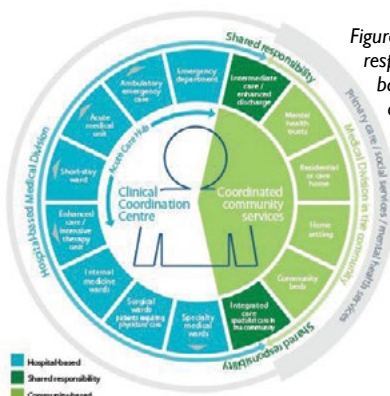


Figure 1: The future of care – shared responsibility between hospital-based and community-based care and services<sup>1</sup>

He also discussed on the use of technology to help patients in the community. A fascinating example was an app “Sensely” devised by Prof Dale and his team where patients could ask questions about their health through an NHS Nurse Avatar named Molly. However, the programme was risk averse so patients would always be counselled to seek medical help if there were any red flags. This will help patients to better understand their health conditions through symptomatology and incentivises the patient to seek help earlier, hence retarding disease progression and reducing morbidity and mortality of the patient.



Figure 2: Molly the NHS Avatar<sup>2</sup>

NHS is in the process of having an approved smartphone App Library for their patients in the hospital and community. It would be exciting to see if their choice would be applicable to our local setting.

Following that there was a lively Q&A session, where we realised the challenges that primary care faced by the public, policy and press were universal and that the solutions in various countries were similar e.g. the role of Family Physicians in the General and community hospitals to improve on care coordination between the hospitals and community.

It is simultaneously ironic yet comforting to hear that NHS General Practitioners and Policy Makers realised how care integration and transition is vital to prevent fragmentation and escalation of costs, which is the path that we in Singapore are pursuing too, as evidenced by increasing number of Family Medicine Departments in Singapore. Such strong affirmation from Prof Dale has certainly helped to reassure our hospital family medicine departments that we are indeed on the right path.

■ CM

## References:

1) The Future Hospital Commission, Royal College of Physicians 2013  
<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/508414245410737545/>

2) Meet Molly the Avatar Nurse is found at:  
<http://adigaskell.org/2015/03/20/meet-molly-the-virtual-nurse/>  
The Horizons Tracker, March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2015.