

Confidences de Salon



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Did you always dream of being involved in medical research/healthcare?

Actually, I really wanted to be an archaeologist or a botanist, and for a time a language teacher. However, medicine is a profession that can be practised under any regime, in any time period and is incredibly diverse; people will always need doctors. As I am always asking questions and there are few good answers to them, research was an avenue that I have become passionate about. My patients often inspire the best clinical research questions.

What is the best advice you had when you were starting your professional career?

Try and be your own boss as much as possible.

What advice would you give someone at the beginning of their professional career?

Do something you love and something you are passionate about! In life, you always have three options should something not be working out for you: leave it, change it or live with it. Life is unpredictable, people are unpredictable, but make sure you never lose sight of what you have and what you have achieved. Even the greatest obstacles and challenges are opportunities to build character, resilience and wisdom.

What has been the greatest change to make a difference in your field in your lifetime?

The introduction of the worldwide web, the enormous leaps in technology, and the revolution in the fields of genetics and molecular biology.

What do you foresee being the next great thing and what do you foresee as being the biggest challenge in your field in the next 10 years?

Personalised medicine is likely to be the next great thing as well as focus on early life and prevention of disease *in utero*, in early childhood and adolescence. Challenges include the introduction of artificial intelligence into the medical and diagnostic fields, which will make the field even less attractive for the innovative and academically gifted to engage with on a practical, “doctoring” level. Another challenge is that much research is focussed on novelty and not necessarily on common-sense solutions and actual need. Many important and interesting ideas and programmes don’t get funded, nor is much research easily translatable to improve the welfare of everyone. Lastly, our concerns should be focussed on those who uphold the “dominant paradigm” at all cost and don’t allow scientific discourse and scrutiny. In these situations, there’s so much more at stake and not much challenge at all, for all the wrong reasons.

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What is your favourite scientific breakthrough from any field?

Continuous positive airway pressure therapy: it's changed sleep medicine forever, probably saved thousands of lives and is hopefully being applied to the faces of some current world leaders nightly; and if it's not, it should be!

How do you see the future of the ERS?

The ERS will continue to grow in terms of harmonising education and the accreditation of respiratory medicine throughout Europe. My hope is that the ERS also continues to support research, collaboration with industry, and original thought and practice in the field so that it remains a dynamic society that remains attractive to its members.

When are or were you happiest?

When I'm with family and close friends. When something is simply awe-inspiring.

What do you dislike most?

Where do I begin? Petty-mindedness, bullying, "no can do" attitudes, cowardice, egotism ... Did I mention intolerance?

Who has been your greatest inspiration?

My father.

Whom would you most like to thank?

My family and closest friends (they know who they are) who have stood by me through thick and thin. I wouldn't be here today without them.

What do you consider your greatest achievement?

There are no criteria to evaluate this!

Who are your favourite authors?

John Kennedy-Toole, Jaroslav Hasek, Guy de Maupassant, Anton Chekhov, Ingrid Noll... the list goes on.

Who are your heroes in real life?

Everyone who shows bravery, courage and selflessness in the face of adversity; who speaks up and acts for justice and truth, even when it places them in danger.

Where would you most like to live?

Seville, Spain.

What is or was your greatest journey?

Travel is one of my passions; each journey is unique in its own right, but the best journey of all is the one that takes me back to sleep in my own bed at the end of a long day.

What qualities do you appreciate most in your friends?

Honesty, steadfastness and the ability to share a laugh!

What qualities do you appreciate most in your colleagues?

Good colleagues can share a laugh, respect your point of view, don't put their feet out to trip you and are open to new ideas and collaboration.

What is your personal motto?

"He who follows his own path, needs no map."
(Queen Christina of Sweden)

What do you consider to be your strengths and weaknesses?

How long have we got?