

The sixth meeting of the Leicester Medical Society took place on Tuesday 5th March. Brigadier Robin Simpson, Queen's Honorary Surgeon, Professor of General Practice and Defence and Postgraduate Medical Dean gave a talk entitled **'Adventures In Medicine: including those of my great grandfather Sir James Simpson'**.

Sir James Simpson was born in 1811. A gifted child, he was sent to university aged 14 years and Medical School aged 16. He was too young to practice medicine when he qualified as a physician aged 19 years! He became a general practitioner with a special interest in obstetrics: his Simpson Forceps are still in use today.

He was much loved and trusted by his patients whom he approached with humour, humanity, respect and friendliness.

In 1839 he married his second cousin to allow him to become Professor of Obstetrics: obstetric care could only be given by married men. At that time, ether was used as a general anaesthetic. It was difficult to titrate the dose and there were several fatalities. Sir James Simpson tried out new hypnotic drugs on his guests after his dinner parties. He was impressed that after his guests inhaled chloroform, they all fell asleep. By chance he had given them the correct dose. He decided to use the drug on his patients.

Although much safer than ether and reliably effective, he faced much criticism from his fellow surgeons and from the church who considered that it was wrong to remove labour pain. Queen Victoria silenced the critics by using chloroform for the birth of her tenth child. She made him Queen's Physician in 1847.

When he died, over a thousand doctors attended his funeral and 100,000 people lined the streets as his coffin passed by.

In contrast to his great grandfather, Professor Robin Simpson found himself only average at Medical School: he passed all his exams but without distinction. On completion of his medical studies, he joined the army.

Brigadier Simpson encouraged the audience to consider joining the Army, Navy or Air Force where leadership qualities would be tested. There would be adventure as well as danger.

He started with general duties along with medical officer training. It was not long before he found himself, during the Iraq War, in charge of 250 prisoners. He determined to look after his prisoners with respect and fairness but was challenged when the ration packs turned out to contain bacon sandwiches! Another challenge was the feigning of symptoms by prisoners to receive better care: medical school teaching does not include advice about identifying and managing those whose symptoms are faked!

Research into all patients entering Camp Bastion looked at the reasons for admission and followed the patients' entire journey from presentation to rehabilitation to see which intervention gives the

best outcome. It was found that the biggest risk to life following trauma was haemorrhage. A tight tourniquet, against accepted medical practice, was the most effective tool to save someone's life. This, along with hypotension resuscitation and bandages containing clotting factors maximises a person's chance of survival.

All medical personnel are trained in MIMS (MAJOR INCIDENT MEDICAL MANAGEMENT). The main risk of severe trauma on the battlefield was road traffic accidents due to the severity of damage to the highways.

He was sent to Uzbekistan to keep peace between two warring factions. He found that the most effective tool for maintaining harmony was courtesy and humour. A big challenge in the delivery of healthcare to a war zone was to turn ineligible people away: an eligible child would be one who was injured by an explosive, an ineligible child was one scalded by a cooking pot. Also, the kits were for adults only and the medical team must provide care to all people including children.

Like his great grandfather, he has been honoured by the queen, receiving the title of Queen's Honorary Surgeon.

Brigadier Simpson was thanked by the LMS President, Professor Mayur Lakhani after answering a number of interesting questions.

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