

John Patrick's UK Tour

Will Taylor reflects on a thought-provoking lecture series

the man

John Patrick is a well known speaker in North America where he has lived in Canada for much of his life after training as a doctor in the UK. He was a main speaker at the CMF student conference in 2003 and is a frequent speaker at international ICMDA conferences, so we jumped at the chance of having him tour around the UK from 13-17 October, all the way from frozen Aberdeen in the north to sunny Brighton in the south.

the tour

Having helped in the organisation of the tour but never heard him speak I wasn't quite sure what to expect. But he spoke very well across all the venues. In total around four hundred people heard John speak in nine talks at eight different universities on subjects like 'Much more than a baby dies in abortion' and 'Can we be good without God?' I heard him speak on 'What Hippocrates knew and we have forgotten' at University College, London.

the talk

John started by stating that everyone wants a doctor they can trust. He went on to point out that your tutors and deans don't know which of your year group are trustworthy - they only know the people who pass exams; but you will know within weeks the people who you would not want near your granny.

Trust is a vital part of Hippocrates' oath. In ancient Greece the doctor and the assassin were

one man; so you could not trust your doctor because someone else may have paid them more to kill you. What Hippocrates and his oath did was guarantee that the doctor would try his utmost to cure you, and never kill - including abortion and euthanasia. Patients voted with their feet and the only doctors that survived in the western world were those who followed the oath. This has been lost as abortion is commonplace and euthanasia may become so; doctors can easily become technicians of a service rather than holistic healers.

The other vital aspects of the oath are: transcendence (acknowledging a higher authority than humanity), the sanctity of life and the moral integrity of the physician. John outlined why the current trend to 'update' the Hippocratic Oath actually removes some of its core values.

more information

John has previously expanded on the Hippocratic Oath in *Nucleus* and you can read it online.¹ His website is well worth a look, with several of his papers and talks, including the ones he gave on this tour - www.johnpatrick.ca. We also hope to have him back in the UK before long, so watch this space!

Will Taylor is a CMF student intern

REFERENCES

1. Patrick J. Hippocratic Medicine; preserving ancient values. *Nucleus* 2003; October:14-21