

The Future is closer than We Think!



Very recently I came across the new book by medical futurist, Dr. Bertalan Mesko. Just reading the title, The Guide to the Future of Medicine: Technology and the Human Touch, started my brain synapses to fire in multiple directions. An avid watcher and fan of "Star Trek" and subsequent sci-fi futuristic shows I have been patiently waiting for Bones' medical tricorder to make its debut. So has the Qualcomm Tricorder X Prize that will award \$10 Million to the team that succeeds in building one!

Imagine knowing what parts of you are at dis-ease without any extra traveling for "more tests", both non-invasive and invasive!

Admittedly, I have only read bits and pieces of the book so far but the title does bring up *my own* questions of human contact (or lack of it) in the fast paced world of medical technology. Let's imagine a snapshot of the present and very near future: There is an ever increasing amount of apps that measure the body's vital signs and other data and can send it directly to your primary care physician, cardiologist, nutritionist, personal trainer, etc. Your medical history records and progress notes can be kept on a flash drive. Your medical team will keep your medical records accessible in the "cloud". Those short doctor visits you are complaining about now will be a thing of the past. With the expense of running an actual office, that will change to the Virtual Office. After all, your doctor visits will happen virtually on Skype and the like. Moving a little further into the future the majority of these calls may be conducted by an artificially intelligent robotic diagnostician. Depending on your health plan you may only be allowed a certain number of minutes on that call. If it's anything serious you will be directed to urgent care, the emergency room, or to call an ambulance. What am I saying? Call an

ambulance? You will be pushing a button on your personal or house alarm to call the ambulance for you! Need surgery? The renowned surgeon half way across the country will be directing that AI Robot to do it using remote controls!

So if you are doing physically well you have just saved an enormous amount of time. But you have erased a series of opportunities for social human contact. Think about it. How many people do you personally interact with during a trip to the doctor? Thinking it won't happen in your lifetime? Think again. The broken down health care system needs to find solutions to finding cost efficient medical care. Continuing advances in computer technology has brought about an ever increasing rate of innovation. Moore's Law states that processing speed and data capacity are doubling every 24-18 months (the range of time is decreasing). This is causing an exponential growth in computer power. It is being predicted that artificial intelligence and biological intelligence will be totally indistinguishable within the next 40 years!Just Pondering.

With Gratitude

Kai