

# Sharing the Understanding of Medicine

Richard Lehman

Professor of the Shared Understanding of  
Medicine



**Where I was born: tremendous is beautiful**











# A book can be a cathedral



# Does Size Matter?

## thoughts of a small town GP

- Small tends to be more beautiful
- Small tends to be more doable
- Everything is about relationships
- The secret of quality is love (Donabedian)



# A Cathedral has to Start Somewhere: thoughts of an old age professor

- Build on the trust between doctors and patients
  - Survey for the best materials
  - Don't wait for the ground to be cleared
  - Learn what is needed from patients
  - Learn how to build from builders
  - Begin something small, teach something big
  - Invite everybody along to help
- “The function of the conductor is to reveal the structure of the music so that every player can respond with boundless love” Wilhelm Furtwängler

# The Shared Understanding of Medicine

Within Our Minds

With Other Clinicians

With Individual Patients

With Everybody

# Sharing Within Our Own Minds

## The Master & His Emissary

(Iain McGilchrist 2009)

**Right brain:** The Master – instinctive, synthesizing, contextualizing, flexible

**Left brain:** The Emissary – “scientific”, analyzing, decontextualizing, algorithmic

# Sharing Within Our Profession

- Conversation
- Discussion of patients
- Discussion of clinical topics and tradecraft
  
- Guidelines
- Learning events
- Reading

# Sharing with Individual Patients

## The Consultation

- Knowledge
- Acumen
- Trust
- Continuity
- Repertoire
- Uncertainty

# Sharing With Everybody

**“...the effect of this state of things is to make the medical profession a conspiracy to hide its own shortcomings. No doubt the same may be said of all professions. They are all conspiracies against the laity; and I do not suggest that the medical conspiracy is either better or worse...” G B Shaw *The Doctor's Dilemma* 1906**

- **Building Trust**
- **Critical Thinking from Childhood On**
- **Reliable Knowledge Sources**
- **Using Social Media**

# The Four Pillars of SUM

- **Recognition & Diagnosis**
- **Interventions & Treatments**
- **Living with Illness**
- **Risk & Uncertainty**

# Sharing the Understanding of Recognition & Diagnosis

**Recognition:** understanding what the patient has come for

**Diagnosis:** what are the useful possible explanations we  
can find together?

**How can we improve:**

Attitudes

Skills

Tools

Contexts



# Sharing the Understanding of Interventions & Treatments

**Interventions:** can include reassurance, waiting, provision of alternative support, knowledge

**Treatments:** non-drug treatments, pharmacological, psychological, referral

**How can we improve:**

Attitudes

Skills

Tools

Contexts

# Sharing the Understanding of Living with Illness

**What is this like for the patient?** How does it limit their life? What are their coping mechanisms? Their goals?

**What is it like to share their lives?**

**How can we work with and enhance:**

Attitudes

Skills

Tools

Contexts

# Sharing the Understanding of Risk & Uncertainty

**Risk:** What's a number-needed-to-treat mean if you can't tell me if it will work for me?

**Uncertainty:** Combating hype and determinism while keeping optimistic

**How can we improve:**

Attitudes

Skills

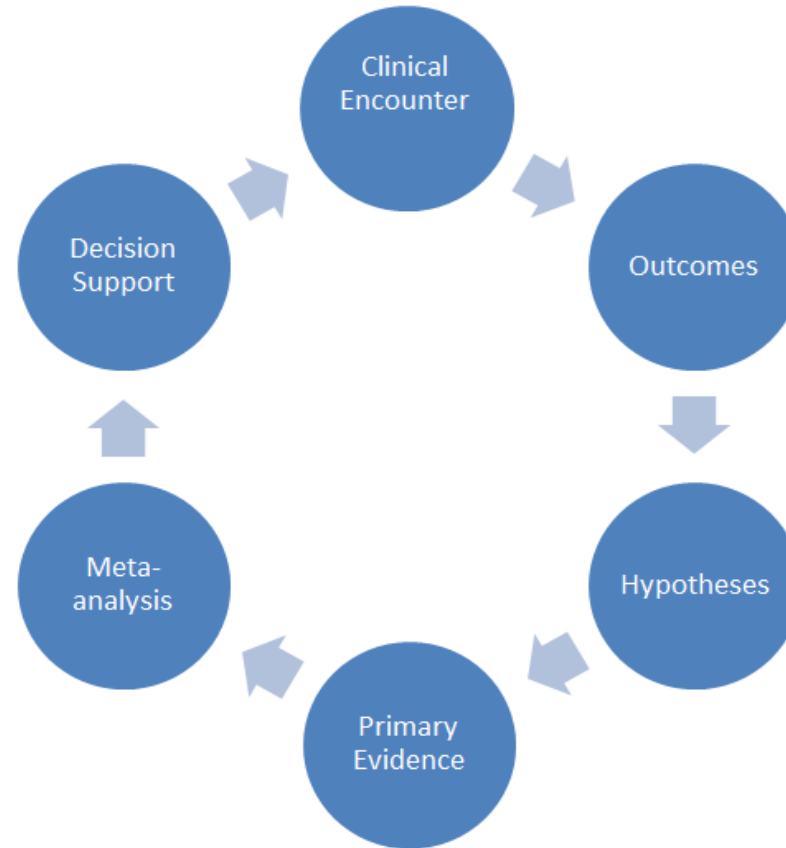
Tools

Contexts

# IN-SUM

	Recognition and Diagnosis	Interventions and Treatments	Living with Illness	Risk and Uncertainty
ATTITUDES				
SKILLS				
TOOLS				
CONTEXT				

# The Great Cycle



# SUM: Enriching the Consultation

- Better listening

ADD

- Better **A**lignment
  - Better **D**iscussion
  - Better **D**ecisions
- 
- Better cycles of mutual understanding
  - Service improvement
  - Research

# Small can be sublime



# A city that is set upon a hill cannot be hid

*Non potest civitas abscondi supra montem posita* Book of Kells p.83





**Can Ireland build a cathedral of humane  
medicine?**

**ar ndóigh!**

**An t-ádh libh**