Paul McKeown who is a specialist in Public Health summarized the big picture in Ireland since 1984. There have been a lot of success stories. Public Health is the science and art of preventing disease. It guides what we should do as a society to preserve health. The moves we make today determine the health and well-being of future generations. The Department of Public Health were established in 1995. Their vision was a population perspective with a sense of fairness and equity combined with ‘academic’ Public Health. The hallmark of good health in society are an adequate housing stock, a well-funded health service, strong public services, and minimization of poverty and poor health. All citizens should have good self-esteem. Public Health faces many obstacles. Society only pays lip service to prevention. The emphasis is on dealing with acute problems and specialties like Public Health have a low perceived value. It is a constant struggle to keep prevention at the forefront of everybody's mind.

Vaccination has been immensely beneficial to society over the last 90 years. The uptake of vaccines has never been higher with most programmes at or above the 95% target. Life expectancy has steadily risen with 3 additional years per decade. Children born today can expect to live into their nineties. Cardiovascular related deaths have fallen and cancer survival rates have improved. RCTs, a previous black spot have decreased from 239 deaths (09) to 162 deaths (12). All the mortality statistics for babies and children have decreased dramatically over the last 30 years. The smoking ban introduced in 2004 has significantly reduced morbidity and mortality. Into the future are the new more strict regulatory directives that doctors now work under which has been shaped by a series of medical scandals on both sides of the Irish Sea. They include Shipman, The Lourdes Inquiry, The Bristol Infirmary Inquiry, The Helix Inquiry, The Ballyclare Inquiry, The Mater Inquiry, and The Limerick Mental Hospital Inquiry. The events have forever undermined the public's trust in the medical profession. Respect is no longer a given, it has to be earned. Doctors can draw a number of lessons from the events of the past 30 years. We can't do everything. We need to concentrate on the job that we were appointed to do. We need basic scientists to do basic science, clinical researchers to do clinical research, and antibiotic stewards to do antibiotic stewardship.

Change occurs both personally and professionally for doctors. We work in a profession that has changed greatly over the last 30 years. Today's clinical practice is unrecognizable from that of 30 years ago. Much of the change has been generated by the worry and angst living with the new sociological attitudes in society has been just as challenging as the medical and scientific changes. Paul McKeown, Des O'Neill and JFA Murphy presented and discussed on these issues at the IMO AGM on Saturday 26th April 2014.

References

Comments: