

Report - 11th October 2011

Presidential Inaugural Lecture

The Inaugural Lecture was given by Dr Kamila Hawthorne, MD MRCP FRCGP, GP at Butetown Medical Practice, and Reader in Primary Care and Public Health, Cardiff University.

It was titled: 'Breaking out of the Ivory Tower', and was a lecture about the 'ivory towers' we, as professionals construct around ourselves. Sometimes the towers serve as places of learning and academia, sometimes they serve as barriers to patient service (it is a lot easier, she says, to handle data than patients).

Dr Hawthorne gave examples of the nature of these virtual 'towers' from her own medical experience, spanning 30 years of practice in Oxford, Reading, Nottingham, Manchester and Cardiff. She asked her audience to reflect on their own careers and experience, to think about their own 'towers' and how they used them. She also gave examples of turning points in her career that resulted in either entering or leaving the 'ivory tower' - role models and inspiring doctors she had met throughout her career who changed her practice of Medicine.

Dr Hawthorne summarised some of her research work with patients with Type 2 Diabetes from ethnic minority groups in the UK, and how her findings had been put into practical use in two major community projects in Cardiff. She concluded with a description of some of her current work in medical education, in the development of the Clinical Skills Assessment of the MRCGP, and more recently, of a new undergraduate curriculum for the School of Medicine in Cardiff. She uses these opportunities to ensure that future generations of students and young doctors will not have to rely on chance to find suitable role models, by building in many of the principles of patient-centred and community oriented care into mainstream curriculum and assessment.

Dr Hawthorne illustrated her lecture with many photographs of her work in the community. She also used her recent travels in Northern Spain, likening the 'Way of St James' to Santiago de Compostella to the pilgrimage of a medical career, that also passes many ivory towers along its way.