

My apologies, it is not my intention to hijack this professional editorial to make a political stand, but I am so filled with horror at the human tragedy that continues to unfold in the Middle East that I feel the need to capture it in writing.

I despair at humanity, locked in a perennial cycle of violence and conflict and wonder what it will take to end this casual disregard for human life. I know I am not alone in my revulsion at the recent news of chemical weapons in Syria or the nerve toxin assassination attempt in Salisbury. How does one reconcile aerial attacks on hospitals that are treating sick and injured patients with the achievement of a political objective? Thankfully, I am also able to marvel at the diametrically opposite perspective of healthcare professionals across the world who work tirelessly, in often dangerous conditions, to ease suffering and aid recovery.

I cringe in my paranoid ignorance at the potential for misuse of our personal information that is enabled through our carefree use of social media, while I am excited by the potential that digital technology can bring to the diagnosis and management of disease. Now, herein lies the paradox that is science; our burgeoning use of technology is giving us previously unimagined abilities to identify and treat diseases at the molecular level, while through another aspect of science we are able to kill, or

TO HEAL, NOT HURT



New advances in science can bring unimagined hope, but can also lead to grotesque destruction.

harm, even greater numbers of people from an even more remote position. Perhaps it is easier to kill people if you cannot see them; how contrary to our own ethos of putting the patient at the heart of all we do, even if we cannot physically see them.

How do we reconcile the increasingly fine focus on the health and treatment of the individual against the ability for even greater indiscriminate harm?

When we make huge steps in science we grasp a tiger by its tail; we have the ability to bring unimagined hope and healing on one hand, and even more grotesque methods of death and destruction on the other. In the face of unfathomable cruelty I have to look aside from the strobe light of blame, accusation and aggression and seek out the quiet corners of selfless

compassion. I take great reassurance from the knowledge that we are part of a global healthcare community of like-minded individuals who care deeply and work to achieve the alleviation of suffering.

In the past eighteen months the “My Lab” feature has shown science in all its practical glory; from the highly specialist laboratories to the large routine department whose staff battled in to work through knee deep snow. I am eternally thankful that I am part of a community that seeks to help and heal, not to hurt and maim.

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