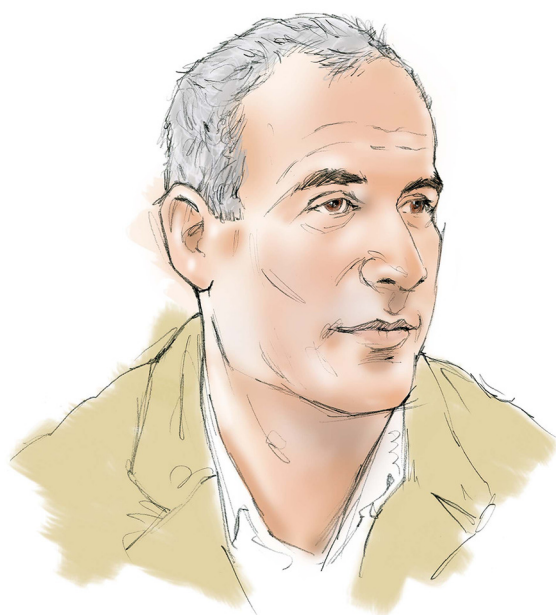




OBSERVATIONS

BMJ CONFIDENTIAL

Simon Conroy: Healthy body and mind



What was your earliest ambition?

I was recently given a letter I wrote to my grandma when I was 16, in which I described my desire to practise medicine, focusing on older people. I'd completely forgotten about that letter, but it reflects where I've ended up. I think that my passion for helping people comes from my mum, who was a nurse.

What was your best career move?

Undoubtedly, responding to an advert in the British Geriatrics Society newsletter for the clinical lectureship in geriatric medicine at Nottingham. At that stage I was a senior specialist registrar with a general interest in everything geriatric, but I had no focus. The move to academia has opened avenues and led me on a journey of self discovery that I'll never regret.

What was the worst mistake in your career?

I don't think that I'd be who I am today without having gone through the tough times as well as the good. So, no regrets or mistakes as such: just opportunities for self development.

How is your work-life balance?

Getting better. It's hard to disentangle the two at times, but my wife generally keeps me on balance.

How do you keep fit and healthy?

Rugby in the winter and mountain walking in the summer. Keeping fit is really important to me: healthy body = healthy mind!

What single change would you like to see made to the NHS?

We're not good at change or learning from "mistakes." There's so much waste and inefficiency, and we could do so much more if people would open their minds to new ways of doing things. In general, making changes in the NHS is really tough.

What do you wish that you had known when you were younger?

The importance of maintaining good relationships while leading change. But sometimes you can't make an omelette without breaking eggs.

Do doctors get paid enough?

More than enough.

To whom would you most like to apologise?

My family, for all of the times I haven't been there, either in person or in spirit.

What do you usually wear to work?

Generally, casual clothes—I rely on my wife and children to guide me. I'm not a natural shopper.

Which living doctor do you most admire, and why?

My close friend and colleague, Ron Hsu. The most humble and generous man I've ever met, he is a font of wisdom, has the patience of a saint, and is the most patient-centred person I've ever met.

Biography

Simon Conroy is a geriatrician at University Hospitals of Leicester and an honorary professor at the university. His research has focused on frailty, recognising its variation among older people and the need to personalise their care. His research led to the development of an acute frailty unit to improve the care pathway and to a dedicated care service for frail patients in the emergency department. These efforts, together with others from emergency medicine and the British Geriatrics Society, led NHS England to establish the Acute Frailty Network, of which Conroy is clinical lead.

What is the worst job you have done?

I've had some really tough ones—old-style registrar jobs with 56 hour weekends every month. But I believe that these tough times make you stronger, so I don't think that I'd describe any job as my worst.

What single unheralded change has made the most difference in your field in your lifetime?

Mainstreaming frailty as a concept and recognising the need to adopt a different approach to older people with complex health and social care issues, as opposed to ignoring or belittling them.

What new technology or development are you most looking forward to?

For me, medicine is mainly about human relationships and interactions. I worry that we may lose that if we focus too much on technologies.

What book should every doctor read?

The Tipping Point by Malcolm Gladwell, and *Black Box Thinking* by Matthew Syed.

Where are or when were you happiest?

Flitting between the university (haven of tranquillity, where I have the luxury of thinking) and the hospital (gritty reality).

What television programmes do you like?

Rugby union or films that distract—action movies, thrillers, etc.

What personal ambition do you still have?

Creating a stronger academic basis for geriatric medicine.

Summarise your personality in three words

Ambitious, determined, patient-centred.

What is your pet hate?

Duplicity and a lack of transparency.

What would be on the menu for your last supper?

Steak frites and a decent red wine.

What poem, song, or passage of prose would you like mourners at your funeral to hear?

Kasabian's "Fire" (assuming it's a cremation).

Is the thought of retirement a dream or a nightmare?

I'm looking forward to spending more time in the sun, and I can't wait to be a grandparent.

If you weren't in your present position what would you be doing instead?

I have no idea.