

Educating for Connected Health – maintaining personhood in a digital world



To say that technology is revolutionising healthcare would be a trite understatement, for we are seeing a tsunami of new technologies across the globe that are transforming every stage of a patient's journey through treatment and care. Collectively this is known as Connected Health. It is clearly bringing about huge benefits in terms of the rapidity of care processes, accuracy of diagnosis, and improved continuity and follow-up. However, some say we are in the midst of the 4th Industrial Revolution which is raising profound questions about what it means to be human in the age of machines.

We cannot, nor perhaps would we want to, stop this rapid growth in technology, but as healthcare educators can we ignore the difficult questions posed? Our responsibility must be to examine these important questions to help shape a future in which healthcare practitioners can comfortably co-exist with machines whilst getting to grips with the transformative implications these changes imply.

I argue in this paper that whilst in the midst of a 4th Industrial Revolution, we need systems of education where humanity is central and notions of personhood – human nature, moral agency, self-awareness, human rights and duties – are routinely and systematically explored. We must elevate essential human behaviours, such as courage, compassion and creativity, to their rightful status. In other words, we need to create spaces where morality, imagination, ethics and empathy can grow and flourish to help future practitioners grapple with the challenges of providing person-centred care in this digital age.

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