

PROFESSOR CINDY CHEW

Tail Lights

How quickly time flies – Christmas and New Year are in the rear view mirror and we are hurtling towards Easter! Phew!

I wanted to learn more about Disability in (Medical) Education – so I hunted down Dr Beth Dillon (MBChB 2023, co-founder and Trustee of the award winning LUNA Project), Scott Duguid (Disability Services, UoG) and Prof Ines Alvarez (Dept of Education UoG, Programme Leader for the MEd in Inclusive Education) to learn more. I have included an excerpt of Beth’s interview for your perusal. Niall Holden (current student) has also written a piece to share his experiences and knowledge on this complex topic.

I found out “Disability” is a broad category: ranging from visible and physical disabilities to invisible ones such as long term chronic health, mental health issues, ADHD, Autism and specific learning disabilities such as Dyslexia. Dyslexia is common – affecting 10% of the population worldwide. High functioning learners with (undiagnosed) dyslexia can “mask” and perform exceedingly well academically until their “usual” support is reduced – such as when they start life in Higher Education.



Students with any disability are entitled to help (they are protected by law under the UK Equality Act 2010, particularly while in Education). “Help” can range from extra time for assessments, flexible deadlines, (“reasonable adjustments”) to individualised, personal learning support with study skills, computer software, mentoring and coaching to help adjust to life – and thrive! – at University.

Scott wanted me to raise awareness among students that the doors to Disability Services are wide open. Even if you are not sure if you have a disability, fill out a form and Disability Services will get in touch, provide support if appropriate and how to progress if not. Also, 18 March marked NeuroDiversity Week. Here is a fantastic resource to check out: <https://linktr.ee/neurodiv>.

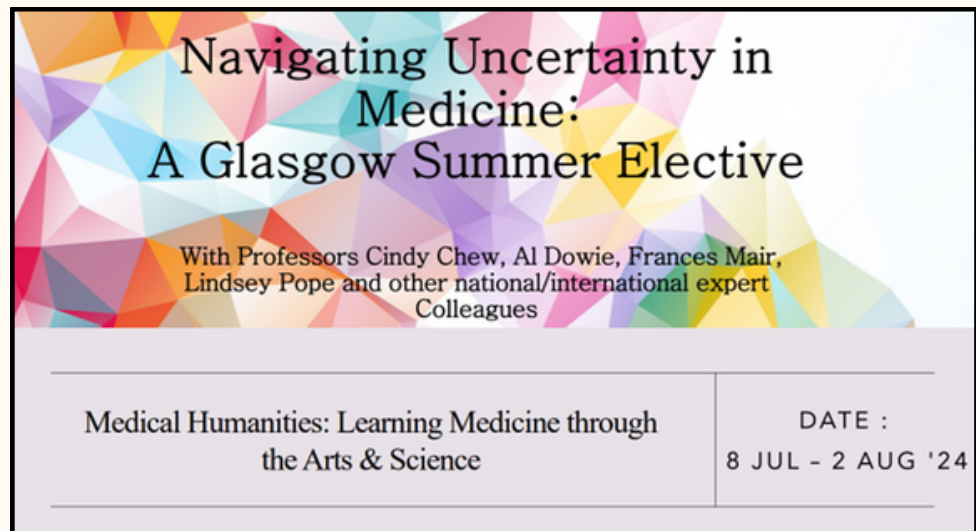
I am very much looking forward to see all your “Visual Abstracts” – this is your opportunity to showcase the projects you have been doing throughout the year, get published in a peer reviewed journal and the first 5 can even earn a little bit of money (enough for a nice meal out). The best visual abstract of the year will be selected by Professor Matthew Walters – winning another £100! Get your skates on and get your abstracts in!



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Finally, a little plug for my fabulously exciting and fun summer elective: Navigating Uncertainty in Medicine. Fill out this form: <https://forms.gle/k5ngUID9FGyn9XCA8> and spend 4 weeks with super star doctors and moi! Until the next Taillights! Cindy.



P.S. My last instalment highlighted Women in Medicine. The embedded links didn't work (sad face emoji!) – so here they are in a table form:

MedChir Meet the Women Professors Event recording	https://echo360.org.uk/media/92122453-54b6-430a-bc07-426a6926b7e9/public
How CT scans came about	https://www.smithsonianmag.com/innovation/fifty-years-ago-the-first-ct-scan-let-doctors-see-inside-a-living-skull-180978792/
300 more years of Gender Inequality	https://edition.cnn.com/2023/03/07/world/un-gender-equality-300-years-intl-hnk/index.html
Inspiring Women of Glasgow Uni	https://www.gla.ac.uk/explore/avenue/ourpast/20inspiringglasgowwomen/
Academy of Medical Science (For aspiring Researchers)	www.acmedsci.ac.uk

A CONVERSATION WITH BETH DILLON

Disability in Medicine

There are 9 characteristics protected under the UK Equality Act 2010 - Disability is one of them.

“Disability” is a broad umbrella encompassing a multitude of conditions. People with disabilities and other protected characteristics, should receive equity in opportunities to learn and thrive in Education – this is known as “Inclusive Education”.

Dr Beth Dillon graduated in 2023 and I caught up with her to learn a little bit more of her time in University of Glasgow Medical School, through the lens of a student – now a doctor - with disabilities.

Hi Beth. Thank you for taking the time to chat about this with me. Are you comfortable sharing your disability?

The main disabilities which affect me day to day are Juvenile idiopathic arthritis. I'm also deaf and have a visual impairment.

Did you disclose your disability to your peers and Medical School?



I did disclose to the medical school and disability services prior to starting as was aware that I may need some additional support in my studies. It is also not entirely invisible so I felt like there wasn't really a choice. With peers I tend to drip feed them when I first meet people. Generally people are curious and my hearing aids are pretty visible so that's usually the first thing I am asked about. This is unless I am using my crutches - then I get a lot more questions. Otherwise I tend to let people know when we are planning things. I can't really walk very far at all, and I am not very fast so it usually comes up. Now I feel I only really mention it if it's relevant to something we are doing or if I am asked about it. I am more than happy to answer questions, however I usually feel awkward being the one to bring it up.

What challenges did you encounter and how did you over come them?

There were lots of challenges at medical school!

Zoom was a bit of a nightmare in COVID - initially it didn't have captions at all and even now they are wildly inaccurate with Scottish accents. I therefore didn't hear the majority of Phase 3 lectures and then any subsequent ones on zoom. I enquired about moving small group teaching onto Teams as the captions are always significantly better and was told this wasn't possible. This was frustrating and in the end I stopped logging on and just spent time going through power points and content surrounding it.

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It didn't take long before I was just choosing which battles to fight and which to just do the best I could with the situation.

Hearing became a lot better with placement, I could go back to using my radio aid (a device which streams speech to my hearing aids) but there were still challenges with masks.

Placement however I struggled with on a mobility perspective. It also was difficult because as part of my JIA, I get frequent high fevers - so getting up in the mornings if I spent the night feverish - was tricky. Attendance was an ongoing issue. I missed all of Phase 2 MSK due to being in hospital. However this was pretty easy to catch up with and have found placement to not be a big issue as long as I was engaged when there and/or make up the time and have open conversations with supervisors.

That sounds tough. Were there any upside to being a medical student with a disability?

Generally I feel like the main upside is empathy. I feel you can better understand the emotions that come with being in hospital and the pure exhaustion of having to fight for your needs to be met. I think it also gives you a more flexible mindset of realizing that a situation may not be perfect but can be worked around and improved. I also find it makes you more likely to be less cynical and to believe patients when you qualify so less likely to miss things.

Overall though I feel like having a disability is neutral in a way.

That's such an inspiring and mature take on what must be a challenging situation. Thank you. Tell us a little about the award winning LUNA Project and why you started this charity (while being a busy medical student!).

The LUNA project is a charity set up by two of my peers and I, which works to increase support for young people aged 13-30. We do this through disability education in primary and secondary schools (start them young!), the creation of resources actually aimed at this age group instead of the little kid resources or those aimed at older people with no in between. We also run blogs, create micro resources and collaborate with lots of other charities and organizations. We've done lots of workshops at conferences and organizations aimed at those working with young people. We are entirely led by under 30s and anyone with any ideas are all welcome to join!

Bravo!! Any particular positive / negative event stand out during your medical school years?

Collapsing in anatomy and spending the subsequent 6 weeks having a QEUH "vacation" definitely tops the list as the most negative event! Overall though I really enjoyed medical school!

How have you found FY1 so far?

I am loving F1! I was in Haematology for my first job which I absolutely loved and was also great for my rubbish immune system.

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I am now on acute admissions, which I have enjoyed less but I do really like the people I work with. I move to A&E in a few weeks, which I am really looking forward to!! I also find it easier being able to finish a day and not having to go home and study even if there is a cap on sick days!

What next for Dr Dillon?

Oh I have no idea what is next. I am just taking things as they come!

Have you any wise words to say to the medical students who are living with a disability?

Just because you might do something differently doesn't mean you are doing it wrong!