Presentation Spotlights Latest Trends in High Tech Medicine

Medical students discovered how their careers in medicine might be impacted by technological advancements in medical equipment and computer software at a recent presentation titled, "High Tech Medicine to Improve Patient Outcomes: No Apps Needed." The school of medicine welcomed Dr. John Tu, vice president and chief medical informatics officer, Beaumont Health System, and representatives from two medical manufacturers – Guardian and Flex Pro – for a high-tech discussion.

Dr. Tu spoke of personal devices like Fitbits, that provide patients with ways to capture health data and ideally, he hopes that hospitals will be able to integrate that personal data with the existing electronic health care records system used by physicians in hospitals to gain knowledge about patient health. He referenced Google how it is developing contact lenses to capture glucose measurements for diabetics as an option rather than having to do a finger poke. He also spoke of using hologenics – think of the three-dimensional screens showcased in Hollywood movies like Iron Man – to visualize and dissect the anatomy of a body. Additionally, virtual visits could supplement the follow-up visit process that occurs for time-constrained patients.

"All of this technology is going to increase your patient experience," Tu said to the group of mostly M1 students. "As physicians, you will have to learn how to use the technology and relate it to the younger computer savvy patients, who will challenge you to use it."

On a smaller scale, students interacted with Guardian Alarm’s products by pressing buttons and examining high tech tools that fit in the palm of their hands. With one in four households in the United States caring for an elderly person, Guardian Alarm’s products are designed for caretakers who need to monitor their patients remotely. Students learned about alert activity detector and the virtual care camera system. The representative explained that when an older adult with dementia walks beyond their determined safe area, a message is sent to a caregivers’ smart phone.

"It’s important to us as future physicians to have an understanding of how technology plays a role in medicine and how we can use it as physicians," said Tom LaRouere, class of 2018.

The opportunities to merge technology for transitioning patients from hospital to home, or to improve communication between patient and physician is an exciting component of medical school. As OUWB students progress through school they will find advancements in technology available to them at every juncture. It will be theirs to embrace and use to enhance and improve the future of medicine.