Medical Fact Or Fiction?

Dr. Stephen B. Shrewsbury

Medical science is changing so fast that much of what's just down the road seems more like a "Star Trek" episode than something you'll soon find at your doctor's office or local hospital. Yet technologies that seemed unimaginable yesterday are already in the works today.

Let's see if you can separate the fact from the fantasy. Take a few seconds to read through the following seven statements. Which will soon be medical realities and which are pure science fiction?

1. Surgery will soon be performed remotely over the Internet, with surgeons working thousands of miles away from the patients they are cutting.
2. Babies will be given a locket when they are born which will serve as their fully portable electronic medical record for the rest of their life.
3. The heel prick that is currently performed when a baby is born today will be replaced by a spit swab for genome sequencing.
4. Body parts that need replacing will be grown and harvested from a lab, making organ donors a thing of the past.
5. Blood tests will disappear and be replaced by "breath tests" via breathalyzers and the collection of urine and hair samples.
6. New bugs that spread infectious diseases will be stopped dead in their tracks in a matter of days, before they threaten large populations.
7. Blockbuster drugs will be replaced by medicines that allow you to patch, and eventually replace your genes.

(Note: Don't continue reading until you've made you your decision about the veracity of the statements above.)

According to Dr. Stephen B. Shrewsbury, all seven of the technologies discussed above will be coming to a medical center near you in the not too distant future. Some are already being used right now.

"Dozens of children and young adults born with defective bladders have already had new laboratory-grown ones implanted in North Carolina," says Shrewsbury. "And remote surgery was first performed in 2001 when New York surgeons removed the gallbladder of a woman located in France, by using computer controlled robots."

But of all the medical breakthroughs, Shrewsbury sees gene patches and gene replacements as the ones that will create the biggest improvements in people's health. "This technology will help millions of people who were previously incurable," he says. "People with rare genetic diseases like muscular dystrophy or sickle cell anemia, as well as widespread killers like cancer and heart disease, will be able to lead healthy, productive lives.

Dr. Stephen B. Shrewsbury is a physician whose 33-year career has taken him from the intimate world of family practice to Chief Medical Officer at a leading biotech firm on the cutting edge of global drug development and therapeutics. He is the author of Defy Your DNA: How the New Gene Patch Personalized Medicines Will Help You Overcome Your Greatest Health Challenges published by 10 Finger Press. Since 2009, he has served on the Oligonucleotide Safety Working Group (OSWG), an international working group devoted to the safe development of gene patch medicines.

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