



The Venture Forum
April Meeting Summary
4/8/14

Medical Innovation Tackles Major Health Issues

Clark University hosted The Venture Forum's April meeting on Medical Innovation. A wide range of presenters discussed how information-sharing and consumer-friendly technology are key factors in the battle against major health issues such as obesity and diabetes. The evening's moderator was Roberta Brien, Vice President of Projects at the Worcester Business Development Corporation.

Well-known endocrinologist David Erani, MD of the Joslin Diabetes Center shared his experiences with diagnosing and treating diabetes and one of its major causes, obesity. Erani observed that a major part of the challenge in combating conditions such as obesity is the difficulty in defining it. He cited the famous Supreme Court definition of pornography – "I know it when I see it" – as applicable to overweight patients. He pointed to the myriad diets, exercise programs, and information available to help patients decide the best way to individually address their specific condition, concluding that the best treatment could be summed up in the simple phrase, "don't be stupid." Erani encourages patients to use their knowledge and commonsense to avoid behavior that would have an adverse impact on their weight and health.

Emmy award winning TV producer Jamie Hammond of the popular medical science show "Second Opinion" commented on how television can be an extraordinary tool for education. "Second Opinion" has enabled viewers to explore various topics of interest to learn more about disease and healthcare issues, winning 20 national awards for excellence. Its popularity has earned it a tenth season on national public television. One of Hammond's other projects, "Biz Kids," is a television program that teaches children about finance and entrepreneurship, created by the producers of the highly popular science series, "Bill Nye the Science Guy," which she also helped co-produce.

The third presenter, Jose Bohorquez, co-founder and CEO of Skulpt, demonstrated how technology originally developed for therapeutic reasons can be repurposed to help consumers get in better shape. Bohorquez described how his new device, called the Skulpt Aim™, uses electrical impedance myography to analyze and monitor muscle fitness. Using the precise information the device collects, consumers can more accurately monitor and develop muscle fitness for improved workouts and results. Like the other presenters, Bohorquez talked about the power of information and how it can help both patients and consumers more effectively address their challenges.

Entrepreneur Matt Kelly, founder of Boston non-profit Health Innovators, concluded the evening's presentations with an overview of the significant global impact of diabetes and how more pervasive and cost-effective diagnosis and treatment will help control it. He sees a comprehensive, community-based system of self-monitoring and complete care management coupled with technological innovation as the most effective way to combat this disease. As part of the solution, Kelly is working on a new patient feedback portal called "Patient Talkback" which enables patients to provide detailed feedback on their care and experiences to help healthcare providers tailor better treatment strategies.

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