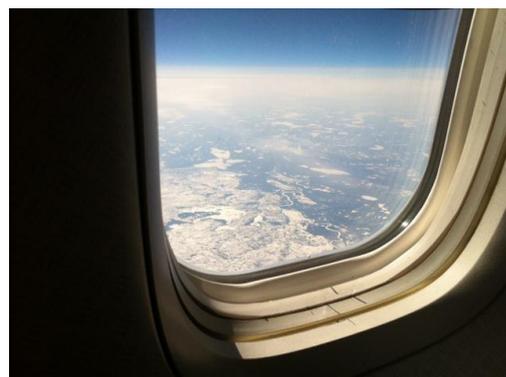
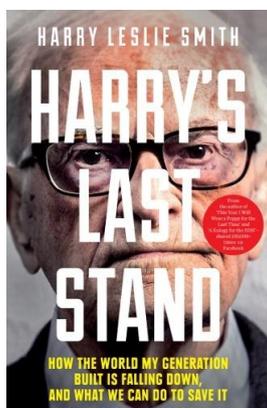


A TRIBUTE TO AIDAN HALLIGAN

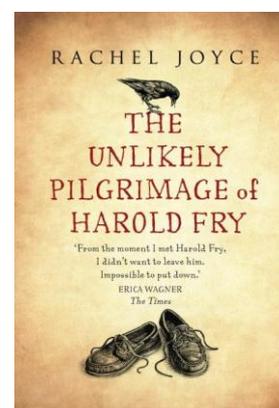
I am 36,000 feet up in the air, on way from Manchester to Chicago, as I write this; beautiful Newfoundland scenery outside my window, have just watched 'Wild' the movie starring Reese Witherspoon and which reminded me of the conversation I had with Aidan Halligan few months back.



I had first met Aidan many years ago when he was the deputy CMO in charge of clinical governance and I was the medical director of North and East Yorkshire and Northern Lincolnshire SHA (NEYNL) and we reconnected when he started the Well North Initiative, as I was in Manchester by then. I had just returned after doing the 999callfortheNHSmarch- I walked the original 300 mile Jarrow march to protest about what was happening to the NHS (<http://leadershipforhealth.com/999forthenhs/>)



Those of you who knew Aidan will understand this: his immediate question was why. He was very perceptive and wanted to get behind the 'obvious' answer about the state of the NHS. I quoted Harry's Last Stand (<http://www.harryslaststand.com/>) which pretty much summed up the 'mood' of the marchers and the book by Rachel Joyce (<http://www.amazon.co.uk/The-Unlikely-Pilgrimage-Harold-Fry/dp/0552778095>) as an example of why people walk; he had actually read it as it was discussed in the book club he belonged to.



All of this came back to me as I watched Reese Witherspoon in the movie Wild, where she walked the 1000 mile Pacific Crest Trail, for self-discovery and healing, and to find meaning again. We do not always know why people do what they do and what makes them tick; and what is important is to respect their reasons and if possible to understand and support them. And Aidan was good at that- he always wanted to know the person, their motivations, what drove them, and adjusted his approach to suit that person. He would have 'enjoyed' that film.

We shared an interest in clinical governance and patient safety and talked about his journey and his phenomenal contributions (not that he claimed this) in the crucial early stages of the start of clinical governance movement. I still remember the first time I heard him speak and the way he mesmerised the audience. But more importantly we shared something else- we had both trained in Ireland! I had spent three years in the Republic of Ireland as an orthopaedic registrar in the 1980s (he was 3 years younger than me) and although we never met there we moved in the same circles then (talk about a small world), and so we knew some of the key people and wondered what would have happened if he had actually taken that post in Ireland- he was headhunted for the top job there few years ago. We also talked about, amongst others, Liam Donaldson, with whom we both had worked, as a person and as the professional, and we both agreed that Liam really had the interests of patients at heart.

Aidan understood people- he had this uncanny ability to touch them, open up and get them to be the best they can be. Not something you find easily and that is why he is such a loss. We were both busy, in different ways, so did not meet often but as it happened we had met only 3 weeks before his untimely demise; he complemented me on my recent Patagonia hike (and we joked about the 'Bucket' List, not knowing) and told me that he was working his way through the compendium of my writings and promised to share his own reflections; seemingly he had also put together his reflections but they were in hard copy. It would be good to see his writings if I can get them but to some extent I know what the key messages would be: that stuff happens but the world is still full of good people, that things can and will get better, and that you must get up, move on and do the best you can.

I have had the privilege of meeting some great people in my life; Aidan was pretty high on that list as someone with the unusual combination of having the knowledge, the ability as well as the humanity and humility.

RIP my friend Aidan and thanks for the good times.

Rajan Madhok

4 May 2015