

“The story doctor” to speak at pain meeting **Friday October 8, 2010**

Professor Brian Broom is known to his medical colleagues and patients as the “the story doctor” for his strongly held philosophy that to treat a person, their personal life story needs to be known, not just their symptoms.

Professor Broom, who is speaking at the **2010 Spring Meeting of the Faculty of Pain Medicine , “Transitions in Pain” (Friday October 8 – Sunday October 10)** in Newcastle, has many examples of illnesses that relate to significant events occurring earlier in a person’s life or around the time the illness began.

He tells of one patient who started getting the first symptoms of her mouth cancer at the age of 33, the same age as her dentist father committed suicide, a tragedy she blamed herself for. Another patient, whose father died from a brain tumour, suffered chronic headaches at the time and then later in life whenever she was in an uneasy relationship with a male.

Professor Broom surveyed people with the poorly responsive condition, chronic urticaria or hives, after using this approach. He said 58% got well by just knowing there was a connection between what was going on in their life and the symptoms and 90% of the rest of the patients got better with “mindbody” counselling that helped them identify feelings that were stimulating the bodily symptom of hives.

“I’m saying that every person has a story and every disease arises in the context of a story,” said Professor Broom, who is also known as a “philosopher physician”.

Professor Broom is an immunologist and psychotherapist at Auckland City Hospital, and leads the unique MindBody Healthcare Diploma and Masters Program at AUT University, Auckland.

He believes that medicine has gone too far down the path of treating the body separately from the mind.

“We have achieved a medicine that is centred around bodies, organs, clinician expertise, technical methodologies and treatment regimes, algorithms, protocols, and looking at the body as an object rather than at the person who is also a subject,” Professor Broom said.

He will be telling the FPM meeting that it is important for specialists treating people with pain to listen to their patients’ “story”.

Professor Broom asks many of his patients “the smorgasbord question” – “What was the most interesting, significant, memorable, meaningful, difficult, troublesome, problematic, hard, difficult, worrying, frustrating, or stressful thing or things happening in your life round the time you got ill”.

For further information, please contact ANZCA media manager Clea Hincks on 0418 583 276 or +61 3 9510 6299 or at chincks@anzca.edu.au.