

“The Christmas Message”

The following is a transcript of the first Royal Christmas Message, broadcast live on radio from Sandringham House, written by Rudyard Kipling and delivered by King George V, 1932.

“Through one of the marvels of modern Science, I am enabled, this Christmas Day, to speak to all my peoples throughout the Empire. I take it as a good omen that Wireless should have reached its present perfection at a time when the Empire has been linked in closer union. For it offers us immense possibilities to make that union closer still.

It may be that our future may lay upon us more than one stern test. Our past will have taught us how to meet it unshaken. For the present, the work to which we are all equally bound is to arrive at a reasoned tranquillity within our borders; to regain prosperity without self-seeking; and to carry with us those whom the burden of past years has disheartened or overborne.

My life's aim has been to serve as I might, towards those ends. Your loyalty, your confidence in me has been my abundant reward.

I speak now from my home and from my heart to you all. To men and women so cut off by the snows, the desert or the sea, that only voices out of the air can reach them; to those cut off from fuller life by blindness, sickness, or infirmity; and to those who are celebrating this day with their children and grandchildren. To all - to each - I wish a Happy Christmas.”

So much has changed since this first broadcast of the Royal Christmas Message in 1932, yet so much has remained the same. The Wireless Radio – the communication tool of the future, joining people together, reaching the masses, allowing a common message to be heard by all. Of course wireless has a rather different meaning in 2010, but the concept remains the same. Results from the World Internet Project in 2009 found that over 80% of New Zealanders classified themselves as internet users, with almost all using the internet every day and most rating it as “important” to their everyday life.¹

In 1932, the people marvelled over their “wireless”, the new way forward in communication and in 2010 we do the same. Prescribing information at your fingertips, electronic decision support, e-resources, e-therapy, the answer to those tricky questions and of course, a way for patients to communicate instantly with their health providers... well perhaps not all technology is good! Interestingly, the World Internet Project found that there is a small but persistent population of ex-technology users that is slowly growing every year. Has technology reached its plateau? Is everybody online that ever will be? What will be our marvellous tool for communication in the future? Will we shun our wireless for the old-fashioned face-to-face?

Technology has its limitations. It will never be able to match the clinician’s judgement in the assessment of a patient whose lip quivers as they tell you they are fine, the elderly gentleman who is burdened by caring for his ailing wife but is too proud to ask for help, the infant who cannot speak, but stares at you with pleading eyes. Healthcare is easier, quicker and arguably smarter, with the tools and gadgets of the 21st century. However, true healthcare must still be delivered with the same compassion that existed in 1932, to reach out and help those who are prevented from leading a fuller life through sickness and infirmity.

We have aimed to provide you the knowledge, to help clinicians navigate the sea of healthcare information. Thank you for listening to our point of view. To quote the words of King George V, albeit written for him by a Nobel Prize winner in literature, “Your loyalty, your confidence in us, has been our abundant reward”.

Merry Christmas from the team at bpac^{nz}

1. Crothers C, Sherman K. The changing digital divide in New Zealand: preliminary report on analyses. Internet Research Group presentation. March 2010. Auckland University of Technology. Available from: www.aut.ac.nz/__data/assets/pdf_file/0019/122518/the_changing_digital_divide_in_nz.pdf (Accessed Nov, 2010).