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Fitzharris '04 to Share Grisly World of Victorian Medicine with IWU

Sept. 28, 2018

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. — Bestselling author and medical historian [Lindsey Fitzharris '04](#) will return to her alma mater to present a talk titled “Good Old Hospital Stink:” The Grisly World of Victorian Surgery on Tuesday, Oct. 30 at 7:30 p.m. in the Hansen Student Center (300 E Beecher St., Bloomington).

The event is free and open to the public; however, guests are asked to [register](#) in advance. Fitzharris' bestselling book, [The Butchering Art: Joseph Lister's Quest to Transform the Grisly World of Victorian Medicine](#), will be available for signing after the program.

Fitzharris will spend the evening shedding light on the brutal and bloody world of Victorian surgery – a place definitely not for the squeamish. She will discuss how surgeons, working before anesthesia, were lauded for their speed and brute strength. They rarely washed their hands or their instruments, and carried with them a cadaverous smell of rotting flesh, which those in the profession cheerfully referred to as “good old hospital stink.”

Fitzharris will also explore a critical turning point in the history of medicine. When surgery could not have been more dangerous, an unlikely figure stepped forward: Joseph Lister, a young, visionary Quaker surgeon whose quest to unite science and medicine delivered us into the modern world. By making the audacious claim that germs were the source of all infection – and could be treated with antiseptics – and working ceaselessly to enlighten the medical world, Lister brought centuries of savagery, sawing, and gangrene to an end.

A Mount Prospect, Illinois native, Fitzharris holds a bachelor's degree in history from Illinois Wesleyan, and master's and doctoral degrees from the University of Oxford, where she also studied as an undergraduate during her junior year through the [IWU Pembroke Program](#).

She hosts the YouTube series Under the Knife and has appeared in the PBS series Secrets of the Dead, BBC and National Geographic. In February 2018, Fitzharris was awarded the [PEN America/E.O. Wilson Prize for Literary Science Writing](#).

Her next book will be on the birth of plastic surgery told through the incredible story of Harold Gillies, the pioneering surgeon who first united art & medicine to address the horrific injuries that resulted from World War I.



Lindsey Fitzharris '04