There is no great stagnation [1]

Written by **Tim Worstall** [2] | Wednesday 4 December 2013

Given my advancing age and the near certainty that I'll have some form or amount of prostate cancer before I shuffle off this mortal coil, for almost all men do, I'm rather glad to see this little piece of technology. It's a robotic arse, doctors for the training of [3].

> Dr. Lok: The image shows a medical student practicing a prostate exam on a virtual patient. The virtual patient prostate exam simulation is designed to help students practice and reduce anxiety with intimate exams. In the experience, the student talks to a virtual person and is able to practice their communication skills. The students can conduct a realistic prostate exam on the plastic mannequin. The mannequin is instrumented with force sensors that can measure where the student is examining and with how much pressure. This enables the system to provide a realistic encounter with a virtual patient that includes communication and physical exam components.
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> Intimate exams (including the clinical breast exam and prostate exam) are extremely high stakes and high impact scenarios for medical students. However, currently there are few tools to enable the practice and acclimation to what are very anxiety generating interactions. Currently, students receive minimal practice and interaction in intimate exams due to the high cost for training and high anxiety nature of the exams.
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> So our research group has spent the past 4 years exploring whether we can improve medical students preparation and performance in intimate exams using simulations, such as the one seen in the photograph.

Now you might think that I'm posting about this just so that we can all have a good snigger and you would, of course, be correct.

But there is an economic point here which is that GDP isn't the be all and end all of our economic system. Having medical students trained so that they can indeed perform these intimate examinations with some modicum of empathy is not something that turns up in GDP figures but we can reasonably assume that said training makes the world a better, happier place.

And there's one more little bit too: the difference between how much better off we are as measured by GDP and how much better off we really are increases over time. Simply because the two methods of measurement are diverging. Looked at purely by GDP the English lifestyle got about 8 times better in the 20th century. But there are entirely sensible and serious economists who would argue that life as it is lived got 50 to 100 times better in this same country over this same period of time. All as a result of the improvements in things that just don't get measured by GDP.

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