Professor David Fitzmaurice, Department of Primary Care and General Practice, University of Birmingham

Comments on Near Patient Testing (NPT) by email:
My concerns with near-patient testing revolve around perceptions. For example is a near-patient test required for a FBC? I would suggest not. There are also distinctions between testing as diagnosis and as disease monitoring. Near patient testing is nearly always more expensive than central laboratory testing and there are obvious concerns about QA for NPT. The indications therefore for NPT are not as ubiquitous as one might imagine and some thought is required to place NPT in context.

The use of telehealth will increase and does seem to have the potential to improve health care delivery, for example providing "real-time" expert opinion in places remote from where the specialist may actually be located. This may tie in with the use of expert decision systems. Again some thought about how these various aspects of technology can be used symbiotically would be welcome.