

## TEDMED 2009 - Day 1



*A bladder grown at the Wake Forest Institute for Regenerative Medicine*

Yesterday we settled into our hotel room in San Diego, grabbed a burger, and went straight to session one of TEDMED. The first set of speakers consisted of a beat poet and performance artist [Sekou Andrews](#), synthetic geneticist [Craig Venter](#), regenerative medicine gurus [Daniel Kraft](#), [Anthony Atala](#), and [Damien Bates](#), magician [Eric Mead](#), *ER* and *Law and Order SVU* writer [Neal Baer](#), geographic medicine popularizer Bill Davenhall, and songwriter \_\_\_\_\_

After him, Craig Venter took the stage and chatted about synthetic biology and how his team synthesized the entire bacterium of *Mycoplasma genitalium* from four bottles of nucleotides (for a good overview of synthetic biology, take a look at this [New Yorker piece](#)). The main idea that kept emerging in his talk is that the DNA of a life form is analogous to the software and then all of the hardware is sculpted upon its code. It intuitively made sense, but the team was surprised when they actually were able to transplant the DNA of one bacterium into another, which lead the recipient organism to undergo physiologic metamorphosis.

Next we heard from a series of speakers involved with regenerative medicine. Daniel Kraft (flashback: [MarrowMiner](#)) spoke of the role of stem cells in medicine and how he discovered a better way to harvest them from the pelvis.



Damien Bates, the chief medical officer of [Organogenesis](#), the company behind biologic wound healing film [Apligraf](#), passed around a sample of their wound healing tissue for people to feel as well as talked about how the skin heals and how it can be aided by regenerative biology.

Anthony Atala, from the [Wake Forest Institute for](#)

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either use some sort of pre-made matrix or need to harvest tissues from other sources and de-cellularize them, leaving behind only the collagen scaffold that can be populated by cells.

To wrap up the hard science part of things, Bill Davenhall talked about the importance of adding more environmental data to patients' charts, under the hypothesis that living in some environments predisposes a person to certain diseases, and this sort of geo-medicine data might be useful to practicing clinicians.

Lastly, Neal Bear, writer and producer of *ER* and *Law and Order SVU*, discussed story telling in medicine, and Jill Sobule sang a lighthearted song about the apocalypse (surprisingly not as depressing as it sounds).

That's all for today. Note that all of these talks will be later made available online for free at [TEDMED.com](http://TEDMED.com).

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