

Dr. Joseph Dervay, a NASA Flight Surgeon, spoke on Thursday to Baylor students on perseverance and his involvement with the future of space travel.

The retired Navy captain spoke about his experiences in the medical field as a Navy Flight Surgeon and his eventual transition into NASA, at the Cashion Academic Building.

Dervay said that as a NASA Flight Surgeon he oversaw the “2020 SpaceX mission and test-flight,” testing the capabilities of future commercial space travel.

In his experiences as a Navy Flight Surgeon, Dervay said that the overall service was “tough” and at times “brutal”, but his job was to make sure that his pilots were always in healthy condition.

“With all of the good that had happened, things also got pretty rough,” Dervay said.

At NASA, Dervay’s career entailed making sure that any situation can be accounted for when in space and on the journey itself. This includes medical treatment, food production, overall safety and wellbeing, and many other facets of space travel that often go unlooked for by the public.

Dervay said that the astronauts must “work well together” as they are a crew that will have to “coordinate and adapt” to the stressful environment of space. Even in the International Space Station, the crew must be aware of their surroundings, both on and off the ground.

“You’re very close with these people,” Dervay said. “You’re living in the same environment all the time, for months.”

According to Dervay, one of the biggest problems he tackled in his career was how to effectively prepare “groups of strangers” for what will come in space. Whether it be performing emergency surgery, or prescribing any medication, every little thing must be considered, he said.

Dervay said that the introduction of AI technology into his area of expertise was another challenging factor to consider. “The bottom line is that everything is going to change; we might as well do it smartly,” Dervay said.

Dervay talked about the process of how much technology has already advanced the little things of his job, with technology like “3-D printing” and “computer modules that help our crew members train.”

“It’s a matter of embracing it all,” Dervay said. “It can be a little scary at times, but it’s all about embracing it, and being ahead of the curve when it comes to those things.”

Dervay said that while there was an ongoing conflict in United States and Russian relation in response to the war in Ukraine, there was a constant air of “professionalism” because he and his staff were constantly working with “human lives” and “politics” cannot get in the way.

Dervay said that the advancement of human history and that the difference between “1492” now, and “a thousand years” later, will be someone like “Neil Armstrong”.

“I will say this as we end here,” Dervay said. “You go through your career path, find things that you really love to do. There’s no perfect job, there’s no guarantee.”

