

Admission Ceremony 2017

Citation for Harry Willshaw, introduced by Carrie MacEwen, Chair AOMRC

What is it that makes a great ophthalmologist? – one who is admired and who others want to emulate – one who is acknowledged for their achievements and who makes and leaves a mark that others want to recognise – such as being awarded an honorary fellowship of a Royal College..... which is the highest award our College can offer.

Is it research skills used to discover important new findings? Is it the ability to teach – to share with our peers and the next generations of doctors? Or, is it taking forward an ophthalmology service – to benefit our immediate patient population and provide excellent patient centred clinical care? Well, the answer - in the case of Harry Willshaw is - in fact, ‘all of the above’!

It is therefore an enormous pleasure to be able to give a citation for Harry - CLINICIAN, RESEARCHER, TEACHER and ROLE MODEL – a pleasure because Harry is an ophthalmologist who encompasses the qualities and skills that I – and all doctors who place patients as their very top priority – admire and hold true as a true professional and ones that we would like to see in ourselves. A shining example of how we would like to be and how we would like to be regarded by our patients and colleagues.

Harry Willshaw trained in Leeds and Birmingham and, on being appointed as one of the UKs first paediatric consultant ophthalmologists, he spent his career developing the best care for children with eye disease in Birmingham, the Midlands and beyond - setting standards for units elsewhere.

Starting from scratch he managed to establish a comprehensive paediatric ophthalmic unit at the Children’s Hospital - providing

- Paediatric Cataract service
- Ocular Motility & Botulinum Toxin clinics
- Ophthalmic Electrodiagnostics
- A Paediatric Contact Lens service
- Genetic Counselling
- And he set up a Joint paediatric Neuro-Ophthalmology clinic
- An effective service for children

However, taking this further, he established and became Service Director of a **Supra-Regional Retinoblastoma** service (against some resistance from other areas, as you might imagine), building up a tremendous multidisciplinary team that continues to thrive and now serves much of England, but also parts of Wales, Scotland and Ireland.

He generated care protocols for children with **retinoblastoma**, including a novel, but much appreciated, shared care service. This was no easy taskanyone who has

worked to establish a service from a standing start recognizes how hard it is, but Harry managed this through sheer determination, great diplomatic skill and huge energy, while managing to remain very popular with people in all disciplines, at all levels, throughout.

Over several years he first engaged his department, then his hospital - (meaning both Clinicians and, that more difficult nut to crack - Management)and then he proceeded to secure the, critically needed, National support.

As if that was not enough, while there was agreement in principle..... there was not sufficient revenue – so, he finally went on to raise the money to buy the necessary equipment - a Retcam digital imaging system and departmental lasers - to facilitate the diagnosis and treatment of **retinoblastoma**. The most memorable fund raising event was a sponsored cycle ride to Paris – everyone who knows Harry has emphasized very clear memories of a lycra clad vision causing quite a stir in the French capital!

Teaching and sharing knowledge.

Harry has always been recognised as a tremendous teacher, one who has who inspired and trained several paediatric ophthalmologists within and outside the Midlands area. He was the Medical Director of the orthoptic school – recognising the important and essential role of the multi-disciplinary team. He ran several courses and trained, at fellowship level, paediatric ophthalmologists from all over the world.

He also made contributions, on paediatric ophthalmology topics, to many key undergraduate and post-graduate textbooks including that famous ophthalmology textbook, so beloved by the ophthalmology trainee - Kanski

His research and contribution to the wider understanding of ophthalmic disease is evidenced by publishing more than 90 scientific papers. This has been achieved as an NHS consultant – not a university appointment. These have covered various aspects of paediatric eyecare –

- strabismus,
- nystagmus and eye movements;
- paediatric uveitis, cataracts and retinal detachments;
- non accidental injury (NAI);
- multiple developmental ocular anomalies
- and, of course, **retinoblastoma**

He has given more invited lectures than I care to start counting and was Secretary of Oxford Ophthalmological Congress, a position that he held for many years. In recognition of his National contribution he was elected Master for the centennial year of the Oxford Congress.

Harry has also been active in College work, being a College examiner, a Member of the Higher Specialist Training Committee (now the Training committee) and Chairman of both the College Paediatric Sub-Committee and the Ophthalmology Child Abuse

working party.

He was, and is, highly respected by colleagues – quote from his anaesthetist - *'As a colleague and clinical director Harry always supported all colleagues to optimise **their** contribution through **example**.'* He has led as much as by example and action.

He was adored by his patients and the parents of those patients – who were devastated, with many tears shed, when he retired from clinical practice

Ladies and gentlemen, particularly those of you who are receiving diplomas today and are about to commence in the next stage of your careers – Harry Willshaw is living proof of the impact that a consultant ophthalmologist can have on individual patients, populations of patients and the future of our specialty.

By bestowing this honorary Fellowship, the College recognises that tireless endeavour and personable skill have resulted in permanent changes in ophthalmology in the UK and beyond -

- through the development of new services
- through clinical research
- through sharing knowledge widely
- and through example.

Harry Willshaw – Honorary Fellow, The Royal College of Ophthalmologists.