Lecture

Introducing John V. Forrester, the 2012 Recipient of the Weisenfeld Award

John Forrester is an extraordinary example of a modern clinician-scientist in the field of ophthalmology, whose nomination for this award was based on a number of criteria that reflect the enormous breadth of his contribution and leadership across many aspects of clinical ophthalmology and eye research.

John Forrester obtained his medical degree at Glasgow University in 1970 and, driven by an early interest in the eye, he went on to train as an ophthalmologist obtaining FRCS (Ed), FRCS (Glas), and an MD en route to becoming FRCOphth in 1990 and FRCP in 1996. He was appointed Professor of Ophthalmology at Aberdeen University at the tender age of 38. There have been numerous acknowledgements of his excellence in medical science and ophthalmology within the UK and abroad. Firstly, in 1998 he was awarded "Fellowship of the Academy of Medical Sciences" (FMedSci) for exceptional contributions to the medical sciences as a result of original discoveries and sustained contributions to scholarship. Secondly, he was made a "Fellow of The Royal Society of Edinburgh" (FRSEd) in 2003. Furthermore, he has had numerous accolades, and delivered numerous named lectures in recognition of his contribution to ophthalmology and eye research, especially in the field of ocular immunology and inflammation, with specific bearings on conditions, such as uveitis and corneal transplantation. He is pre-eminent as probably the most distinguished and accomplished clinician-researcher in Scotland, and the UK more broadly, in the discipline of ophthalmology. He has published over 340 peer-reviewed papers, over 75 reviews, and 5 books. He has supervised over 36 PhDs and at least 2 of his protégées (Andrew Dick and Harminder Dua) now currently are full professors of ophthalmology in the UK. He was editor of *The British Journal of Ophthalmology* for over 8 years and currently serves on the editorial boards of many leading eye, immunology, and cell biology journals. As evidence of his wider contribution, he not only is chair of ophthalmology, but is Head of "Infection and Immunity Division" at the Institute of Medical Sciences, University of Aberdeen. He recently has been appointed as Professor at the Centre for Ophthalmology and Vision Sciences/Lions Eye Institute at the University of Western Australia.

John Forrester as a Leader and Mentor in Clinical Ophthalmology

Until recently, John was Head of the Clinical Service of Grampian Region, which has over 30 ophthalmologists. He acted in a leadership role in coordinating ophthalmologic clinical practice in the northeast of Scotland for over 20 years, thus providing an invaluable public service in the National Health Service system for the people of Scotland. Until his retirement recently from clinical work, he also ran a specialist public uveitis clinic in Aberdeen which has been pivotal to the management of patients with complex ocular inflammatory disorders.

Nationally, Forrester chaired the training program for the GMC-registered subspecialty of Medical Ophthalmology, a joint training program between Royal College of Ophthalmologists and the Royal College of Physicians in the UK, which led to establishing the first clinical training program in this specialty in the Grampian region. From this base, it now has spread nationally. Further evidence of his leadership role in ophthalmology within the UK is evident from his committee work for The Royal College of Ophthalmologists, leading national reviews for the management of diabetic retinopathy, and his past role as Chair of Wellcome Trust Panel for Vision Research. John is a passionate Europhile, continually promoting research within Europe and his work in European Vision and Eye Research (EVER), an organization in which he was a past president.

John Forrester as a Leading Cell Biologist, Immunologist, and Eye Researcher

The breadth of John Forrester's research interests is most remarkable. Besides covering a range of disciplines relating to ophthalmology, including vitreous hemorrhage, uveitis, diabetes, and age-related macular degeneration, he has headed up a large laboratory performing cutting edge applied research in various fields, including cell biology, vascular biology, and immunology. His work is an exemplar of "bench to bedside" research, as demonstrated by his recent study of the use of interferon-alpha in the treatment of uveitis. This broad range of interests likely was inspired by his earliest scientific studies under the mentorship of leading cell biologists, such as Peter Wilkinson, Adam Curtis, and Endre Balazs.

John Forrester continues to publish research in the leading journals across a broad range of scientific disciplines, and he is a frequent invited and as plenary speaker not only at clinical and basic eye research meetings, but also at general immunology/cell biology meetings – each laudable in their own individual right and all the more impressive when considered as a whole. In relation to ophthalmology, he has delivered several prestigious named lectures, including the Richardson Cross Medal, Duke Elder Lecture, Doyne Memorial Lecture, Ophthalmic Research Lecture, Kimura Lecture, Ida Mann Medal, Donder's Medal, and Bowman's Medal lectures. John is admired greatly by all the clinical and scientific community who have had the pleasure of knowing him. He is a gifted, but humble, clinician-scientist with a strong sense of moral purpose. His charitable work in the Burma-Thailand border, Ethiopia, and Jerusalem clearly reflect his humanist nature and generosity of spirit.

In reading of the pioneering efforts of a lay person, such as Mildred Weisenfeld, who believed in the need for eye research and her tireless work to establish the "Fight for Sight," which laid the foundations for the establishment of National Eye Institute, one can only conclude that she would have considered someone such as John Forrester, and his extensive achievements in clinical ophthalmology and his leadership in basic sciences aimed at fighting the causes of many forms of blindness, as a most deserving recipient of the Weisenfeld award.

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