Medics at Alumni Weekend 2014

The TCD Alumni Weekend 2014 attracted about 100 medical graduates, mostly classes celebrating their anniversaries, from the UK, USA, New Zealand, Canada, Germany, Norway and Ireland. We were especially delighted to see two graduates from 1954 – Dr David Hogan, from Dublin, who attended with his wife Romy, and Dr Evan Kostick over from Florida with his family members.

A Medical Alumni Symposium, initiated by Dr Ian Smiley, class of 1974, opened with a lecture by Rose Anne Kenny, Professor of Medical Gerontology at Trinity College Dublin, “Happiness, Friendship and Health”. The talks by the class of 1974 were given by Declan Quinn, Professor of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at College of Medicine, University of Saskatchewan, and Head, Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Royal University Hospital, Canada; Helen Roberts, Associate Professor Women’s Health, Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, University of Auckland, New Zealand; Robert H. Young, M.D., Robert E. Scully, Professor of Pathology, Harvard Medical School, and James Homer Wright, Pathology Laboratories, Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston, Massachusetts, USA. Ian Graham a graduate of 1979, Professor of Cardiovascular Medicine in Trinity College Dublin, and Professor Emeritus of Preventive Cardiology at the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, gave an engaging talk titled “Starting Next Monday, You are Minister for Health. Now What?” Unfortunately our new Minister for Health and graduate Dr Leo Varadkar TD was unable to attend this robust session. We would like to take this opportunity to wish him well in his new ministerial role.
Owen P. Smith becomes Honorary Regius Professor of Physic

Professor Owen Patrick Smith, Professor of Haematology (2002) and Honorary Fellow (2009) of Trinity College Dublin and Consultant Paediatric Haematologist at Our Lady’s Children’s Hospital, Crumlin, was awarded honorary title of Professor of Physic in the School of Medicine in June of this year. Professor Smith entered Trinity College in 1976 to read Natural Sciences and graduated with a moderatorship in Biochemistry in 1980. He went on to graduate in Medicine from Trinity in 1985 and after 9-year postgraduate training at the Royal Free Hospital School of Medicine and Great Ormond Street Children’s Hospital, University College London, he was appointed Consultant Haematologist at the National Children’s and St James’s Hospitals, Dublin, with appointments in Trinity College.

The Regius Professor of Physic is the oldest Chair of Medicine in Ireland and it is among the oldest in Europe. John Stearne was appointed to the first chair of medicine in Trinity College Dublin in 1662. The title of the chair was Publique Professor of Medicine but it later became known as the Regius Professor of Physic. The chair has been held by many distinguished professors over the centuries including the famous William Stokes between 1845 and 1878. Professor Donald G. Weir was the most recent holder of the chair.

Academic Neurology Research in Trinity on a Firm Footing

Orla Hardiman, Professor of Neurology, TCD, and Consultant Neurologist at Beaumont Hospital, delivered her inaugural lecture on 11 September which looked at the landscape of Motor Neurone Disease (MND), also known as Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), in Ireland and how research, diagnosis and treatments for this condition have evolved.

The event marked her appointment as the first Professor of Neurology in Ireland and the opening of the newly established Unit of Academic Neurology in Trinity, the first of its kind in Ireland. Professor Hardiman has made several significant discoveries in the area, including the identification of a gene for ALS/MND. The disease affects about 300 people at any one time in Ireland with some 110 new cases reported each year. In 2007 Professor Hardiman received a Health Research Board Clinician Scientist Award which enabled her to continue both her clinical work and world-class research.
Trinity Scientists as Part of an International Genomic Study on Schizophrenia

As part of a multinational, collaborative study, researchers from the School of Medicine in Trinity College Dublin have helped to identify over 100 locations in the human genome associated with the risk of developing schizophrenia in what is the largest genomic study published on any psychiatric disorder to date. The findings, which were published online in Nature, point to biological mechanisms and pathways that may underlie schizophrenia. This could lead to new approaches to treating the disorder which has seen little innovation in drug development in more than 60 years. In the genome-wide association study (GWAS) published in Nature, the authors looked at over 80,000 genetic samples from schizophrenia patients and healthy volunteers, including over 3,500 Irish participants, and found 108 specific locations in the human genome associated with risk for schizophrenia. Eighty-three of those loci had not previously been linked to the disorder. Core funding for the Psychiatric Genomics Consortium comes from the U.S. National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), along with numerous grants from governmental and charitable organisations, as well as philanthropic donations. Work conducted at the TCD Psychosis Research Group was funded by Science Foundation Ireland, the Health Research Board, the NIMH and the Wellcome Trust.

Two School of Medicine Academics Become Members of the Royal Irish Academy

The School of Medicine Professors Padraic Fallon and Rose Anne Kenny were recently admitted as members of the Royal Irish Academy - the highest academic honour in Ireland.

Padraic Fallon leads the Inflammation and Immunity Research group. In 2008, he was a recipient of a prestigious Science Foundation Ireland Stokes professorship and appointed Professor of Translational Immunology.

Rose Anne Kenny is Professor of Medical Gerontology where she established the Trinity Ageing Research Centre and the Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA). She is internationally recognised for her expertise on syncope and neuro cardiovascular function.

Provost Dr Patrick Prendergast with the new members of the Royal Irish Academy – TCD Professors Ciaran Brady, Mani Ramaswami, Rose Anne Kenny, Padraic Fallon and Andrew Bowie
The 2014 Burkitt Medal was awarded to Dr John L. Ziegler of University of California San Francisco at a celebratory dinner in Trinity on 17th September as part of the 9th International Cancer Conference and Cancer Week Ireland. The award recognises people with the integrity, compassion and dedication matching that of Denis Burkitt, a Trinity graduate who is known for his discovery of Burkitt’s lymphoma. Dr Ziegler has made significant contributions to the fields of medical oncology and to global health. Continuing the legacy of Denis Burkitt, he directed a highly productive research team in Uganda that made dramatic progress to cure a particularly lethal form of childhood cancer. Burkitt himself once remarked of him, “You have turned my small path into a superhighway”. Ziegler’s career amply exemplifies Burkitt’s curiosity, leadership, and humanity. Earlier in the day Dr Ziegler gave the Burkitt Lecture “From a Small Path to a Super Highway” at the Cancer Conference themed “Living with Cancer in the 21st Century”.

"Medicine in Trinity College Dublin” Launched

The book “Medicine in Trinity College Dublin, An Illustrated History” by Professor Davis Coakley was published earlier this year. The author follows the history of the school over three centuries. Davis Coakley is a doctor and writer who graduated from University College Cork in 1971. He served as a consultant physician at St James’s Hospital, Dublin (1979-2011), and was professor of medical gerontology in Trinity College Dublin (1996-2011). He was Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences between 1993 and 1999. He is co-chairman of the Centre for Ageing Research and Development in Ireland, a body which promotes research on ageing across the island of Ireland. He is chairman of the Trustees of the Edward Worth Library and he served as Dun’s Librarian in the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland. He is an honorary fellow of Trinity College Dublin and a fellow of the Irish, London, Edinburgh and Glasgow Colleges of Physicians. He is the author and editor of books on medicine, medical history and literature. His book “Oscar Wilde: The Importance of Being Irish” was published in 1992 and is recognised as the first work in what is now a flourishing field of Wildean literature and research. He is currently writing a history of St James’s Hospital, Dublin.

Professor Paul Browne, Head of School of Medicine, and Dr John Ziegler

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Save the Dates

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3 December 2014

Christmas Homecoming
22 December 2014

21-23 August 2015
Alumni Weekend at TCD
– more information will be provided in due course at www.tcd.ie/alumni/events

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