



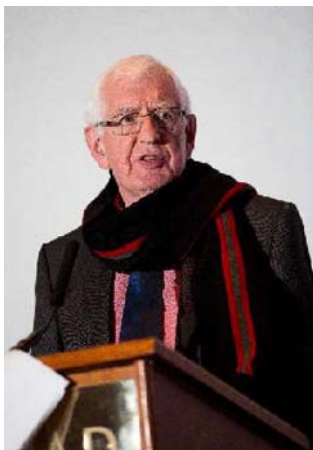
## UCD School of Medicine Scoil an Leighis UCD UCD Medical Graduates Association



### UCD MGA Distinguished Graduate Award

#### Citation for Dato Dr Leslie Lam Given by Dr Niall Keaney

Friday 12<sup>th</sup> May 2017



**Dr Niall Keaney**  
UCD Medicine 1967

President, Dean and Fellow Alumni,  
Firstly, I would like to say how pleased I am to be here and I, like you, am exceedingly grateful to *UCD Medical Graduates Association* and all those unsung who have beavered behind the scenes to bring this gala to such a successful fruition. Please show your appreciation of their endeavours.

Some of us attended the tour of the medical school facilities at Belfield and listened to a most interesting set of talks. A highlight for those of us old enough and fortunate enough to have learned at his feet was Professor Conor Ward's presentation. He was honoured last year at the medical graduation ceremony with the award of a DSc and I'm told he received a standing ovation. He ranks alongside those other great Dublin doctors Abraham Colles, John Cheyne, William Stokes, Robert Adams, Robert Graves, William Wilde and Dominic Corrigan immortalized eponymously in the history of medicine.

My pleasant duty tonight is to introduce you to the achievements of Dato Dr Leslie Lam who having worked alongside Professor Ward acknowledges how much he owes to that shared experience. Leslie Lam first crossed my eyeline when I was 16 and in the Castle, the sixth year at Blackrock College where he came to matriculate. So what brought a Singaporean youth Leslie Lam Kwok Tai to Dublin to study medicine? Well I blame the De La Salle brothers who had charge of his education at home. But also, and very important in the hierarchy of Chinese family culture, number one son Laurence had graduated with a B Comm from UCD in some years earlier and after working in America returned to Malaysia to the family business – banking. Leslie's father tried to pressurize him into the same career – because of course there could not possibly be the same opportunity for making money outside banking! Some of you will appreciate my irony here.



Dr Declan O'Callaghan (UCD MGA President), Dr Patrick Felle (Associate Dean & UCD Medicine 1983), Prof Conor Ward (UCD Medicine 1947), Dr Niall Keaney (UCD Medicine 1967), Dato Dr Leslie Lam (UCD Medicine 1967, 1970) and Prof Patrick Murray (Dean, Medicine & UCD Medicine 1988)



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But Leslie was adamant, his father capitulated and Leslie graduated MB BCh BAO in 1967. While in UCD he met his future wife Ivy Yap Chiew Fah (class of 1969) who continues to work as a family physician. They have two daughters Patricia and Katherine who were born in Dublin.

Leslie has been described as a friend of UCD. Where does friendship come from? Obviously there has to be an affinity but also opportunity. And for Leslie and me, Pat Kinsella, John Lennon, Aidan MacGennis (who sadly died young) and Michael JG Smith our friendship opportunity was the five terms spent together in the anatomy dissection room and we sustained a considerable closeness throughout our medical course. Leslie was excellent at dissection so subsequently when he and I spent a year together with Professor Paul Cannon undertaking a Traineeship and a BSc in Pharmacology, I would let him cannulate the femoral veins of experimental rats as he was more likely to be successful. So, the transition to interventional cardiology and human femoral arteries was really a doddle for him.

Fifty years ago in 1967 we were based across the road here in Earlsfort Terrace – and now all is much changed. And when I look in the mirror I seem to resemble my mother more and more. She gave her body to the UCD Anatomy Dept and I am sure, were she here tonight, that she would recommend you all do the same. We found the whole process painless and we could mourn at leisure and often. And we have a whole new take on the phrase “receiving the remains”.

I mention my mother because she became Leslie’s godmother and there is a story I would like to share with you Leslie and Ivy and you all. In her nineties and profoundly deaf she was living with my sister Maeve (class of 1974) in Salford. She had to be admitted to Hope Hospital and a diligent registrar decided on a mini-mental test. One question thought appropriate for someone of her age was “Who was the king at the time of the second world war?” My mother was a royalist but complex or what? Those around the bed tried to help by repeating “who was the king” and “second world war”. Eventually she thought she had processed the question and asked “Who was the king?” And on receiving rapturous applause smiled, thought for a moment and said “Elvis Presley”. I will have my answer ready too.

Leslie did his postgraduate training in medicine paediatrics and cardiology here in Dublin with several mentors and lifelong colleagues Professors Conor Ward, Sean Blake and Eoin O’Brien has. He obtained a DCH and MRCPi and subsequently became a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland in 1987. That same year he was made a Fellow of the Academy of Medicine of Singapore.

Now here I want to digress to identify two of our class of 1967 who have had distinctions conferred by Royal Colleges – John Donohoe who has acted as host for our year for this celebration (thank you John) was President of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland and you are not going to believe this but Paddy Boland, an orthopaedic surgeon, became a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians of London! I was there with Sue and Ann our wives. In introducing Paddy, the Registrar of the College told the assembled recipients that their fellowships were a recognition of a considerable contribution to the NHS and to the training of junior doctors but for surgeons to be so recognized they had to have achieved something stratospheric!



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So back to earth and Leslie's highly successful career as an interventional cardiologist. After completing his training here he returned home to work in Singapore General Hospital. He became a consultant there before transferring to Mount Elizabeth Medical Centre. He was recognized as a leading cardiologist in South East Asia and became physician and cardiologist to the Sultan of Brunei who conferred the title Dato (The Most Honourable Order of the Crown of Brunei) on him in 1984. Leslie has also been previously honoured by UCD receiving an Honorary Fellowship of the Faculty of Medicine in 2005. Then Leslie spoke to the medical graduands and it became apparent to me why he had chosen medicine over banking when his altruism was made plain in his advice to them to put their UCD education to good use and *"Please remember to return something to society when you are successful"*.

Well Leslie has returned much and of particular importance for him has been his pro bono work in Myanmar. This attracted the wrath of Voice of America in 2008 questioning his motives. But Leslie was clear that a doctor's duty is to the patient saying *"I will treat Osama Bin Laden just as I will treat George Bush"*. He has also carried out pro bono work in the Maldives.

Leslie has maintained a strong and continuing connection with UCD and has given generously to support a newer generation of UCD students and biomedical scientists. An annual Dr Leslie Lam lecture at UCD Medical Graduates Meetings informed and delighted alumni for a period of five years. Also, a number of gifted students have received scholarships to pursue summer research at the University of Queensland. In June 2014 Leslie was conferred with an Honorary Doctorate of the National University of Ireland (Doctor of Medicine, honoris causa) which only six people have received in the university's 160 year history.

Leslie has many other interests. As a youth, he was a scuba diver but Professor Blake advised him to concentrate on cardiology. Now he wins at golf. He served as Director of the Singapore Ireland Fund that supports Irish cultural events and has assisted a number of Singaporean students to pursue tertiary education here in Dublin. A partnership with Professor Eoin O'Brien has resulted in the donation of the O'Brien-Lam collection to UCD in 2012 – a treasure trove of Irish literature with many priceless original Samuel Beckett items. More recently Leslie has funded several postgraduate

research fellowships for Molecular Medicine Ireland. He is also a connoisseur of wine, an activity that he pursues with remarkable enthusiasm and expertise and generosity.

Dato Dr Leslie Lam has been a great friend of education in Medicine and Biomedical Sciences and the School of Medicine and the whole UCD community are eternally grateful. It is in recognition of this friendship and of all you have contributed that the *UCD Medical Graduates Association* is pleased to present its Distinguished Graduate Award to you and I call on the President of the Association, Dr Declan O'Callaghan, to make the presentation. Thank you.



Prof Patrick Murray, Dato Dr Leslie Lam and Dr Declan O'Callaghan