

### Obituary

#### Professor Crispian Scully: Goodbye to a giant



Prof. Crispian Scully, CBE, DSc, DChD, DMed (HC), Dhc (multi), MD, PhD, PhD (HC), FMedSci, MDS, MRCS, BSc, FDSRCS, FDSRCPS, FFDRCSI, FDSRCSEd, FRCPATH, FHEA

It is paradoxical and profoundly distressing to the new Editor-in-Chief of *Special Care in Dentistry* to have to dedicate his first editorial in memoriam to his mentor and the person primarily responsible for his appointment to this post.

I first met Professor Scully during a seminar held in Bristol in the early nineties. I cannot believe it was a fortuitous meeting, but rather that it fulfilled the Hindu saying “When the student is ready the teacher will appear”. During those years, I saw him offer his unconditional support to so many young colleagues, each with their own concerns, especially when they “dared” to challenge him scientifically with a rash question or with a critique of one of his papers.

In the scientific field, Professor Scully was ahead of his time. In the early eighties he reported the first evidence of the presence of viral nucleic acids in oral squamous cell carcinomas, he wrote about Ebola virus in 1996 and about human transmissible spongiform encephalopathy in 2000, and up to his death he led the campaign to promote human papilloma virus vaccination for adolescent males. His research vocation is endorsed by his authorship of more than 1100 publications, including 40 textbooks, with an H-factor of 70 and the recognition of such distinguished institutions as the International Association for Dental Research.

His leadership capacity and his views on oral pathology, so broad yet so dynamic, led him to serve on the boards of distinguished scientific societies, including the Academy of Medical Sciences of the United Kingdom, the European College of Dentistry, the International Academy of Oral Oncology, the International Committee of the American Academy of Oral Medicine, the International Federation of Oral Medicine, and the European Association for Oral Medicine, of which he was a founder member.

His book "Medical Problems in Dentistry," now in its seventh edition, merits special mention. This book brought him recognition not only through the Doody and Glaxo editorial prizes but also through its anthroponym, "The Scully," which identified it as a reference text in the international field of dentistry. Professor Scully also leaves us a long list of editorial works, with his collaboration in the edition of 11 books and his work as editor-in-chief of such prestigious journals as *Oral Oncology*, *Oral Diseases*, *Special Care in Dentistry* and *Medicina Oral Cirugía Oral y Patología Bucal*.

His prolific clinical activity testifies to his special dedication to his patients. He was director of the WHO Collaborating Centre for Oral Health-General Health and was honorary consultant to a number of hospitals, including the Royal London Hospital, the Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre, in Oxford, University College Hospital and Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children in London, as well as the European Institute of Oncology in Milan. In 2002 he was awarded the honorary title of Commander of the British Empire in recognition of the dental care he provided to persons with special needs.

One of Professor Scully's most important attributes was as an academic adviser. In 1994 he moved to London to become Professor of Oral Medicine, Pathology and Microbiology of the Eastman Dental Institute, combining his teaching activity with the Deanship and Director of Studies and Research of that same institution, a post he held until 2009. In those 15 years under the leadership of Professor Scully, the Eastman Dental Institute, inaugurated in 1931 under the patronage of the philanthropist George Eastman to treat the most disadvantaged children, became an academic centre linked to the University of London, a global reference in postgraduate training and translational research, and was distinguished in 2002 with the Queen's Anniversary Prize for Higher and Further Education. One of the unique aspects that Professor Scully brought to the Institute was its diverse approach, substantiated by the creation of the first World Health Organisation Collaborating Centre for Oral Health, Disability and Culture and unequivocally reflected in his book, *Culturally Sensitive Oral Health Care*.

Professor Scully had been ill, very ill, for almost three years. Time and again he urged me to be most discreet and not to divulge this situation to our colleagues. Instead of seeking sympathy, he decided to confront his illness, working with frenetic energy, as reflected by the more than 40 publications registered in the MedLine database in the past year alone. He visited our University in Santiago de Compostela for the last time on 28<sup>th</sup> October, 2016, to receive an honorary degree Doctor Honoris Causa, adding to titles previously received from the Universities of Athens, Granada, Helsinki and Pretoria. We talked for nearly two hours, during which he spoke almost exclusively of his continuing projects, new books, webinar, papers,... with such rare passion, broken only by his emotion on talking as he had never done before about his wife, Zoe, and daughter, Frances.

I shall always remember his sense of irony that made him so English, so exclusive, whilst always remaining such an open, communicative and approachable person, no doubt through Zoe's enduring influence, so deeply rooted in the Mediterranean. This shining light in the field of Dentistry, an exceptional academic, a wise and generous man, leaves a remarkable legacy; this is our farewell from a giant, from my friend, Cris.

Pedro Diz Dios

Editor in Chief