

Citation on Sir Donald Irvine – 17th Gordon Arthur Ransome Orator

LY Ho, *FAMS*

It is my pleasure and privilege to introduce Sir Donald Irvine as the 17th Gordon Arthur Ransome Orator.

Donald Irvine was President of the General Medical Council from (GMC) 1995 to January 2002. He was the first family doctor to be elected President in its 150 years of existence. Sir Donald took up office just as the medical profession in the UK – and the GMC – entered the most turbulent period in their history. Today, although partly retired, he is still active in championing his lifelong belief in a strongly patient-oriented approach to medical and healthcare. To this end, he is currently chairman of Picker Institute Europe, an Oxford-based charitable organisation committed to the promotion of patient-centred healthcare, Honorary Professor in Health Sciences at the University of Durham, Chairman of the Advisory Board to the Medical Faculty at the University of Warwick's new medical school, and a member of the Advisory Board of the National Consumer Council.

Throughout his professional life, Sir Donald has had extensive teaching and research interests in general practice and on standards of professional practice and the quality of healthcare across medicine generally. In the 1960s, he was one of the pioneers of the new vocational training for general practice. In 1983, he was elected Chairman of the Council of the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP). Concerned about the unacceptability to patients and conscientious doctors of the huge variations in the standards of general practice at the time, he persuaded the College to launch what became known as the RCGP Quality Initiative. This was intended to commit College members to lead by example by demonstrating their ongoing competence to practice through regular clinical audit and appraisal. It was a herald of the regular revalidation of all doctors' licenses to practise which comes into force through the GMC in 2005. As part of the Initiative, members of the public were invited to bring a patient's perspective

to the work of the College. Today, all medical Royal Colleges have their patient representative groups.

Modernising professional regulation, including bringing the public in as full partners, and promoting modern ideas about professionalism in medicine, were the central themes of Sir Donald's Presidency of the GMC. Earlier, as chairman of the GMC Standards Committee, he had been responsible for the development of *Good Medical Practice*. This consciously patient-centred professional code, first published in 1995, sets out the duties and responsibilities – and the professional standards – that form the basis of doctors' licences to practise and medical education throughout the UK. In one form or another, *Good Medical Practice* is now used widely around the world, and indeed there are echoes of it in the Ethical Code used today by the Singapore Medical Council.

Sir Donald has written widely on general practice, medical education and quality themes in health. His contributions to public life have been widely recognised. In 1986, he was awarded the CBE and, in 1994, knighted for his services to medicine. He has been awarded an honorary degree by 6 British universities, and is an honorary fellow of several medical colleges at home and abroad. Last month in Boston Harvey Picker, the founder and benefactor of the patient-centred care movement in the USA, presented him with a special award for "Outstanding Contributions to Patient Centered Care".

Sir Donald has 3 children and 6 grandchildren. He is a keen gardener and enjoys walking especially at home in Northumberland. The garden and the countryside provide ample opportunities for bird watching, which is a life-long hobby.

Tonight, Sir Donald has chosen to speak on the topic entitled "*Patient-centred Professionalism*". I present to you Sir Donald Irvine.