

Ciaran Barry

Born: 1928
President: 1989-25 May 1991 (died in office)
Died: 1991

Ciaran Barry, Medical Director of the Central Remedial Clinic (CRC) and President of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland, died on 25 May 1991. Although aware of his serious illness, myeloma, for 12 months he soldiered on until a few weeks before the end. He died while President. Barry was a Consultant Physician and Rheumatologist at the Mater, and an Honorary Paediatrician due to his masterful work at the Central Remedial Clinic.

Barry was born in Donegal and attended primary school in Frosses. He received his secondary education in Blackrock College, where he won medals in rugby. He did his undergraduate medical training in University College Dublin, graduating in 1952. He did his internship in the Mater Hospital and always considered himself a 'Mater Man' along with Bryan Alton (qv) and Ivo Drury (qv). Barry trained in rheumatology and medical rehabilitation in Guy's Hospital London from 1960 to 1964. He was conferred with an MD from the National University of Ireland in 1961.

Barry was seduced back from London by the remarkable Lady Valerie Goulding, with whom he was a lifelong soulmate, becoming Medical Director of the CRC in Clontarf. He was appointed Consultant in Rheumatology and Rehabilitation at the Mater in 1964.

Barry's career had three major strands, rheumatology at the Mater, rehabilitation particularly for children with cerebral palsy at the CRC, and Registrar and President of the College of Physicians. Despite these consuming commitments, he had a great interest in the arts – music, painting, and collecting modern art pictures. He organized concerts in the College, initiated restoration of the College's paintings and the library. He particularly encouraged younger artists and musicians and enjoyed watching their progress.

Barry was a charming, serious man with beautiful handwriting, clinical vigour and rigour, diligence and enthusiasm for the CRC and the College. He was Registrar of the College from 1975 to 1989, and created an essential administration which was efficient, caring, courteous, dedicated and cheerful; all strengths of his own character. His output of work as Registrar was prodigious and his own modesty and unpretentiousness meant that its full extent could easily be overlooked. Throughout his time as Registrar and President of the College he was always conscious of the important contribution of the College to the development of medicine in Ireland.

Whilst the Mater provided his livelihood, Ciaran's love and life's work was in the CRC, where he excelled as an instigator, programme director and stimulator of many services for, and studies



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in, cerebral palsy. Under his directorship the CRC developed and expanded to the present day where it has an international reputation in paediatric rehabilitation. 4,000 patients now attend the CRC from all over Ireland, including 75% of all children with cerebral palsy. Ciaran Barry was instrumental in establishing the only Microelectronic Research Centre in Ireland in 1984, the computerised Gait Analysis Laboratory (the first in Europe) in 1990, and the introduction of a Seating Clinic for wheelchair patients. From 1983 to 1987, Barry was President of the International Cerebral Palsy Society. In the last decade of his life, he delivered invited lectures in Paris, Copenhagen, Gothenburg, Lisbon, Boston, New York, New Orleans, Oxford, Madrid and San Francisco. At the same time, he either chaired, or was a member of, some thirty medical committees.

Ciaran Barry was a kind doctor and a good man, with limitless compassion for his patients. He gave his time to the underprivileged of our society – the handicapped and the crippled. Caring for such children requires specific skills namely infinite patience, knowledge, humour and a willingness to talk to parents, all of which he had in abundance. The handicapped children of Ireland had a great friend in him, to whom they owe a great debt of gratitude. A man of many talents, huge industry, and of whom it was said that ‘he opened doors, he opened windows, he opened minds’.

DG

With thanks, appreciation and plagiarization to Dr Owen Hensey and Mr Frank McManus



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