

Citation for Professor Harminder Singh Dua as honorary fellow of the Royal College of Ophthalmologists

by

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to be delivered on Friday Sept 7th 2018

Mr President, fellow members of Council, diplomates, most welcome guests, it is highly appropriate that, during the College's 30th anniversary year, we recognise one of the truly influential leaders in world ophthalmology by bestowing on him the highest award the College can give – an honorary fellowship. It is my pleasure, both as Vice President of the College but also as one who has been fortunate to have been a consultant colleague of the recipient for many years, to present to you Professor Harminder Singh Dua as one of this year's recipients of our honorary fellowship award.

Many doctors, and particularly ophthalmologists it seems, who have reached Professor Dua's age (and I am not going to tell you that of course!) have either already retired or are about to retire. It is a testament to his continuing enthusiasm and zest for the subject that when I asked him about retirement a few years ago, he looked at me in a way that only he can and said "Ophthalmology is my hobby as well as my life's work – I shall never retire!"... and this is clearly the main reason for him continuing at the ferocious pace that has characterised his career to date. In fact if I could divide and package his dedication, drive, commitment, determination and creativity and distribute it in equal measure to all who are receiving their fellowship certificates today, I would guarantee the success of British ophthalmology for the next decade at least.

Harminder qualified in Medicine in India and quickly chose ophthalmology as a career, adding the first of many postnominals including a PhD before moving on to add British specialist qualifications to his Indian ones. A period of time as a Lecturer and Senior Registrar in Aberdeen was followed by a fellowship and then Associate Professorship in the USA before returning to the UK to take up the first Chair in Ophthalmology in Nottingham in 1994 where he has lead the Academic Unit ever since. As well as supervising around 45 PhD and MD

students he has actively supported NHS consultants to become honorary professors within the University of Nottingham - I was the first of three. This helped maintain an academic atmosphere in the NHS department, so difficult to achieve in today's challenging environment. With some financial assistance from a mentor from the USA, he quickly established a laboratory in the Academic department and was a great supporter of the department's move into a new building in 2000 which now accommodates a larger lab and more office space. The Academic Unit of Ophthalmology performs well within the University with a total of £3.67 million via 70 grants over the last 24 years.

Professor Dua is the sixth ex-president of our College to receive this award among the 46 previous honorary fellows. The list of names, available on our website, reads like an inventory of the Great and Good in our subject. Harminder continues the theme having been an outstanding role model and ambassador for British Academic Ophthalmology for most of the years the College has been in existence. Before becoming President he served in many posts within the College including as Chair of the Education Committee. His amazing capacity for work is exhibited by his propensity to multitask. Whilst holding the role of College President from 2011 to 2014 he was also the editor in chief of the British Journal of Ophthalmology, the President of the European Society of Cornea and Ocular Surface Disease Specialists, the President of the European Association for Vision and Eye Research Foundation and the Chairman of the Clinical Council for Eye Health Commissioning.... and all this whilst running an academic university department and providing a specialist service within the NHS – it is clearly not just females who can succeed in the multitasking stakes!

Professor Dua is no stranger to accolades – this will be his third honorary fellowship and accompanies those bestowed by The Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh and the College of Optometrists. In fact he has over 125 awards including The Rotary Foundation Global Alumni Service to Humanity Award, The Times Higher Education Award 2014 for 'Research project of the year', and the World Society of Paediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus Gold Medal. The bedrock of these awards has been his prolific research output which currently stands at over 350 scientific publications. But numbers are not everything of course and he is probably most famous for his

discovery in 2012 of a new anatomical layer of the cornea which goes by his name – Dua’s Layer. An already busy schedule of invitations to speak then exploded exponentially and in 2017 he visited 18 countries including the UK and delivered 73 lectures.

But such Academic activities are only a part of what Harminder does extremely well. He is first and foremost a rather special doctor who is devoted to his patients, always taking whatever time necessary to ensure their understanding of their condition and the available options for treatment. He is in his element in the clinic, always having an entourage of students at all levels accompanying him from room to room. In a specialty where it is rare to observe your consultant colleagues at work, an opportunity to judge the quality of the care he or she delivers occurs you read their report following a second opinion on a patient; Professor Dua’s communications are an education in themselves, both in their format and their content. Harminder promotes an ethos of “no blame” when reviewing a patient referred to him, which is both helpful to the patient, who then does not dwell on the past, and to the referring doctor who can request advice with impunity. Indeed, he treats all colleagues, medical and others, with the utmost respect, looks for positives in all matters, and encourages others to use their skills productively. Attributes that today’s diplomats should attempt to emulate.

Like all great leaders, Harminder continues to expand his repertoire, having taken on just this year the role of joint Head of Service for Ophthalmology in Nottingham. His experience of negotiation and his debating style (always ask a question in a manner that will result in a predictable response) will no doubt serve him well in this role.

So is there anything that Professor Dua is not particularly good at? Well I have to call upon inside knowledge on this one – and unfortunately I have a similar level of skill in this activity – playing cricket. Although we were both members of our department’s cricket team some years ago we were not over blessed with ability - although we did provide the winning partnership for a particular match against our arch rivals Birmingham one year!

If I was asked to use just one word to epitomise Harminder it would be “honourable”. Making a difference is what we all strive to do in Medicine.

Ladies and gentlemen and particularly our diplomates who have their whole career as a consultant ahead of them, Professor Harminder Dua demonstrates that individuals can make a huge difference to those they come into contact with, whether they be patients, relatives, colleagues or students, sometimes the world over. Diplomates, remember fondly this day for many years for your own success, but also for the achievements and qualities of the person your College honoured on the same day. As he has done, make your life's work the pursuit of excellence in Ophthalmology - Mr. President I present to you Professor Harminder Singh Dua – Honorary fellow of the Royal College of Ophthalmologists.