

Doing things the Wright way

Knighthed in the New Year's honours, we speak to Barts & the London Warden Professor Sir Nick Wright



Ferras Alwan
Editor-in-chief

PROFESSOR Sir Nick Wright, Warden of Barts and the London studied medicine at Durham University before completing a PhD at Oxford. A histopathologist by training, he had been Professor of Pathology at Hammersmith Hospital and Deputy Principal of Imperial College School of Medicine before moving to BL. Popular amongst medical students, Prof Sir Wright has continually supported the medical school retaining its autonomy and identity.

When did you find out?

25th November but I had to keep it absolutely deadly quiet. If you tell people and it gets out they can take it away from you. I told the wife and kids about it but otherwise deadly quiet.

It must have come as a bit of a shock?

Total shock I mean, I thought it was only pop stars or people who gave large donations to political parties who got knighted and I've done neither and I've never been president of a medical college or done anything for the government really so it was quite a surprise really.

So what do you think is your biggest achievement?

I've been thinking a lot about this, all I've really done is my job, whatever's come my way I've done. I was Professor of Pathology at the Hammersmith for a long time and then at the Imperial Cancer Research Fund I was Director of Clinical Research then latterly I've been



Dean of Barts and the London and I suppose the organisation I've made the most difference to is Barts and the London. When I came five years ago staff had pretty low morale but now we've turned the corner and I think we're becoming a top medical school again. So I would certainly count in my book what I've done at Barts and the London as being the most satisfactory achievement.

By all accounts things have changed a huge amount since you've taken over.

Well I should say so, I think they probably have. I feel a lot happier about the school than compared to when I came here.

Well there's been an explosion in the amount of research during your tenure.

I think that was largely what I was brought in for. I'm not real-

ly an educationalist by background, I wouldn't make any pretence to be although I am told by Dr Colvin and the students I am very student friendly, but I wouldn't make any pretence to being an educationalist. So I was probably brought in to turn the research around and it's what I'm in the process of doing.

And is that the long term aim?

It's only five years since I came and I think this is a ten year job and I think I plan to carry on for another five years if I can, and at the end of ten years we'll see where we are. Our current trajectory is certainly up to plan and we'll keep trying to do like that if we can.

What are your personal aims?

My aims are to ensure the standards of medical education in

Barts and the London, make sure the students continue to be the great guys that they already are and I think we have probably the best medical students I have ever worked with, and I mean that. And generally look after the school in terms of medical school welfare which I am interested in - I see Vicky Tittle every month so that's kicked in and that's very important. I'd like to see research in the medical school increase by another order of magnitude over the next five years so that's my aim for the school and I suppose my own personal aim is my research and I'd like to get my Cancer Research UK grant renewed in November! It comes up for renewal then.

So how would you like people to address you?

Sir Nick or Sir Nicholas - Sir Nick Wright is probably best.

And will your family address you so?

No! They'll call me by the usual derogatory terms I should think!

So you're now the senior figure in the London medical world?

Umm, I wouldn't say senior figure, I mean the senior figure is called the pro-vice chancellor and he's elected by the heads of medical schools and that's currently Mike Farthing, he's the dean at Georges. But I mean the pro-vice chancellor does all the administrative stuff for the faculty of medicine and quite honestly I've got enough to do.

So you're not going to stamp your authority then?

I'll certainly stick up for our medical school and make sure our medical school gets a fair crack of the whip but I certainly won't be behaving any differently now.

Will the medical school still be called Barts and the London in ten years time?

We will always be Barts and the London. I'm very emphatic that we're Barts and the London and Queen Mary so we're BL at QM and that's all decided and we will be BL at QM for the foreseeable future, well for as long as I'm in charge anyway. I think that's generally agreed that that is our name - I have a very good relationship with the principal, I was terrified he was going to go off and become the principal of King's as the last thing I want is a new principal to come in and disturb the way we work because we work very well. I think he's very happy with BL at QM so we call ourselves Barts and the London.

So have you set a date to go to the Palace?

Yeah next week - it's a week on Thursday (9th February) - very quick as I'm W.

Did you have a choice of the date?

No, I was commanded to appear - I had to cancel a trip to Japan! I was supposed to be giving a talk but I can't go!

Well you can't say no to Her Majesty can you?

Absolutely not, no!

MS would also like to congratulate Dr Fiona Moss, Post-graduate Dean at the London Deanery for her CBE.

CENTRAL CHANCERY OF THE ORDERS OF KNIGHTHOOD
St. James's Palace, London SW1
31 December 2005
The QUEEN has been graciously pleased to signify her intention of conferring the Honour of Knighthood upon the undermentioned:
Knights Bachelor

BALL, Professor John Macleod, Sedleian Professor of Natural Philosophy, University of Oxford. For services to Science.
CREWE, Professor Ivor Martin, D.L., Vice-Chancellor, University of Essex and Lately President, Universities UK. For services to Higher Education.
DANKWORTH, John, C.B.E., Jazz Musician. For services to Music.
FOX, Christopher, Q.P.M., President, Association of Chief Police Officers. For services to the Police.
GAMMELL, William Benjamin Bowring, Chief Executive, Cairn Energy plc. For services to Industry in Scotland.
HART, David Michael, O.B.E., Lately General-Secretary, National Association of Head Teachers. For services to Education.
MAGGER, Ian Bernard Vaughan, C.B.E., Second Permanent Secretary, Department for Constitutional Affairs.
MCCLAY, Dr. Allen James, C.B.E., Chair, ALMAC and Chair, Queen's University of Belfast Foundation. For services to Business and to Charity in Northern Ireland.
MILLS, Keith, Chief Executive, London 2012. For services to Sport.
MILTON, Simon, Leader, Westminster City Council. For services to Local Government.
MONTAGUE, Adrian Alastair, C.B.E., Chair, British Energy. For services to the Nuclear and Electricity Industries.
MOSS, Stephen Alan, lately Director of Nursing and Patient Services, Queen's Medical Centre, Nottingham. For services to the NHS.
PEPPER, Professor Michael, Professor of Physics, University of Cambridge. For services to Physics.
REEDIE, Craig Collins, C.B.E., Lately Chair, British Olympic Association. For services to Sport.
RITBLAT, John Henry, Chair, The British Land Company and Chair of the Trustees, Wallace Collection. For services to the Arts.
SAVORY, Michael Berry, lately Lord Mayor of London. For services to the City of London.
SHERBOURNE, Stephen Ashley, C.B.E., lately Chief of Staff to the Leader of the Opposition.
SINGLETON, Roger, C.B.E., lately Chief Executive, Barnardo's. For services to Children.
TEASDALE, Professor Graham Michael, President, Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow. For services to Neurosurgery and victims of head injuries.
VARNER, David Robert, Permanent Secretary, H.M. Revenue and Customs.
WESKER, Arnold, Playwright and Director. For services to Drama.
WOODWARD, Thomas Jones (Tom Jones), O.B.E., Singer. For services to Music.
WRIGHT, Professor Nicholas Alcwyn, Warden, Barts and the London, Queen Mary School of Medicine. For services to Medicine.

**What's in a name?
Nicholas Alcwyn Wright will collect his Knighthood after Thomas Woodward, better know as legendary Welsh crooner Tom Jones.**

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