

Professor Thomas Pitt Ford

15th November 1949 – 17th August 2008



Tom Pitt Ford, Professor of Endodontology, Director of Education and Vice Dean of the Dental Institute, and Director of Institution and Academic Audits for King's College London, UK died peacefully at his home early on Sunday morning of 17th August 2008.

Tom qualified from Guy's Hospital Dental School, London, UK in 1971 with honours in Prosthetic Dentistry and went on to gain his FDS from Glasgow and his PhD from the University of London in 1980, and latterly was awarded the FDS from both Edinburgh and London in honour of his contributions to Endodontology.

He was a major world figure in Endodontology. He gained his PhD with Jack Rowe at Guy's Hospital

Dental School and went on to pioneer the first UK-based Masters programme in Endodontology through the University of London. He became internationally known for his work and published widely himself. As Editor of the *International Endodontic Journal*, Tom made a significant contribution to enhanced scientific rigour in the field. He was appointed to a Chair in Endodontology at United Medical and Dental Schools in 1997.

Tom's meticulous attention to detail was legendary and under then Dean of Guy's, Frank Ashley, Tom was credited with superb administration which resulted in the Dental School scoring a maximum 24 out of 24 in the Quality Assurance Agency subject review of Dentistry. This served him in good stead when in 2002, he was appointed Director of Education in the merged King's College London Dental Institute, a post he held until just before his death. This was an enormous task processing an entry of 160 students a year over 5 years and timetabled across both the Guy's and Denmark Hill campuses and the polyclinic at St Thomas'. His appointment as Vice Dean to Professor Nairn Wilson, Dean of the Dental Institute, also recognised his leadership qualities within King's College and his last appointment as Director of Institutional and Academic Audit for the whole of King's College following on the post of Chair of the Education Committee for the College is also a suitable recognition of his wide profile and administrative ability. He was awarded the Dental Alumni Distinguished Service Award in 2008 in honour of his contribution to the Dental Institute.

His major mark, however, will have been his contribution to the development of British and International Endodontology and his extensive writing of research papers, books and reviews, as well as his scholarship as an editor in the area. His books *Essential Endodontology* (jointly with Professor Dag Ørstavik), *Hartys Clinical Endodontology* and *Endodontics: clinical problem solving* (with Heather Pitt Ford) are standard student text books. In addition to being an outstanding teacher and gifted clinician, he successfully supervised seven PhDs and 35 Masters students and thus passed

on his knowledge and expertise to the next generation. His legacy is that Endodontology is now a well-established specialty in the UK.

Tom published over 100 original scientific and review papers in peer-reviewed journals and had an international reputation in endodontic research. His major areas of focus were in such diverse areas as: leakage and its lack of correlation with clinical outcome; tissue responses in pulp capping; pulp vitality assessment – including Laser-Doppler, ultrasonics and Mineral Trioxide Aggregate. In fact, Tom was way ahead of his time in many of his areas of interest and he collaborated extensively with such well known figures as Dag Ørstavik, Mahmoud Torabinejad, Ram Nair, to name just a few.

Uniquely Tom was elected twice as President of the British Endodontic Society (BES). Indeed, Tom was a Council member of the BES for many years and his wisdom and political insight were invaluable as the society developed to become one of the largest and most influential specialist societies in the UK. Tom also contributed to the work of the European Society of Endodontology where he held the honorary position of Editor for many years and was a member of its Executive Board. He also chaired the working group that developed the 'Quality guidelines for endodontic treatment: consensus report of the European Society of Endodontology' that was published in the *International Endodontic Journal* initially in 1994 and then revised in 2006. This contribution to the management and direction of UK and European Endodontology will have an impact for many years and is a fitting legacy of his professional career.

Tom was Editor of the *International Endodontic Journal* from 1982 to 1991. He took over the position from Fred Harty at a relatively tender age and immediately made improvements to both the format and content. As a result of these changes, the *IEJ* quickly established itself as one of the most successful scientific endodontic journals in the world. During this time, his meticulous attention to detail was a great advantage and his

editorial rigour was a major reason why the *IEJ* improved its reputation and impact.

Tom's death is a great loss not only to his family, but also to his colleagues at King's College London Dental Institute, the dental academic world and to endodontics. His contributions have been great and diverse – not just to the dental profession and the King's College London Dental Institute (and its predecessors) but to the College as a whole. The latter benefited immensely from Tom's leadership for several years of the College Education Committee and his more recent key role in preparations for institutional audit. Tom was a distinguished clinician and researcher, but he also cared greatly about teaching and learning, to the great benefit of the whole of the rest of the College as well as of endodontics and dentistry. His serious looks belied a gentle and sensitive underlying personality. Tom was totally reliable and it was this combination of attributes that made him so popular with and much admired by his year group. He was also a master craftsman and anyone who visited his home and workshop realised that his talents were not restricted to dentistry. Tom had a very positive personal influence on Guy's and later King's College life for he was a man not only of uncommon knowledge and skill but also of extraordinary selflessness and dedication: he gave so very much and he did so with highly commendable modesty and a very amusing dry wit. His influence and example will survive him, but he will be sorely missed.

He has been superbly supported by his wife, Heather, and three children throughout his illustrious career. Tom's father, Bill, was a Guy's trained dentist and lives in Dorset and Tom's daughter, Alex, is a Guy's (King's College London) trained doctor.

A memorial service for Professor Thomas Pitt Ford will take place at 11 AM on Wednesday 3rd December 2008 at Southwark Cathedral, London Bridge, London SE1 9DA, UK.

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