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Invited editorial

Professor Ken Fearon – 3 August 1960 to 3 September 2016



The sudden demise of our friend and colleague Kenneth Christopher Howard Fearon on 3 September 2016 at the young age of 56 has left us deeply saddened. The worlds of surgery, nutrition, metabolism and enhanced recovery have lost one of the best academic leaders of our generation at a time when he was most productive.

Ken Fearon was born on 3 August 1960 and raised in Glasgow, Scotland. He attended St. Aloysius' College in Glasgow and subsequently studied Medicine at the University of Glasgow and graduated with Honours in 1982. He was described by his peers as an exceptional student and was awarded the Brunton Memorial Prize during the MBChB course. He developed an interest in Surgical Oncology at an early stage of his career whilst training at Glasgow and Edinburgh under the tutelage of luminaries like Sir Kenneth Calman and Sir David Carter. He was awarded the Doctor of Medicine (MD) degree by the University of Glasgow in 1986 for his thesis entitled "Mechanisms and Treatment of Cancer Cachexia". He obtained the Fellowship of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow in 1988 and was awarded *ad eundem* Fellowships of the Royal Colleges of Surgeons of Edinburgh and England in 1996 and 1997 respectively. Ken was appointed to the post of Lecturer in Surgery at Edinburgh University in 1988 and was subsequently promoted to Senior Lecturer in 1993 and Professor of Surgical Oncology in 1999. He also held the post of Consultant Colorectal Surgeon at Western General Hospital, Edinburgh from 1993.

Besides being a busy clinician, Ken also devoted himself to innovative surgical research and was a much-loved undergraduate and postgraduate teacher. His clinical research focused on cancer cachexia, nutritional pharmacology, enhanced recovery after

surgery, clinical trials and improving surgical outcomes. He had supervised numerous MD and PhD theses and had over 300 publications in peer-reviewed journals, including the New England Journal Medicine, Nature and Lancet Oncology. He had an H-index of 73, with 47 of his publications having been cited more than 100 times. In the truest sense, Ken was a physician who could operate extremely well. He remained loyal to his clinical work and his patients. He had an extraordinary talent for surgical research, with a brilliant mind that was always recognising clinical problems, formulating hypotheses and seeking solutions. He had the capacity to ask the right questions and also the stamina and stubbornness to answer them, often through large complicated clinical trials.

During his distinguished career, Ken was the recipient of numerous honours. He was awarded the Cuthbertson Medal by the Nutrition Society in 1991 and was a recipient of the James IV Association of Surgeons Traveller's award in 1997. He was elected as member of the James IV Association of Surgeons in 2000 and was President of the International Association for Surgical Nutrition and Metabolism from 2005 to 2007. He had served as examiner for the Intercollegiate Specialty Board in General Surgery and was Chair of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh Research Board. He was also Chair of the College's Ophthalmology sub-committee and the Lorna Smith Charitable Trust Committee. He was a member of the National Cancer Research Institute Palliative Care Cachexia Sub-Group and was a member of the Scottish Home Total Parenteral Nutrition Managed Clinical Network Executive Committee. He was a board member of the Society on Sarcopenia, Cachexia and Wasting Disorders and received the Hippocrates Award from the Society in 2009. He was honoured by the European Society for Clinical Nutrition and Metabolism with the Wretling Lecture in 2011 and was also awarded an honorary doctorate by Örebro University in Sweden in 2015. Together with Olle Ljungqvist he initiated the Enhanced Recovery After Surgery (ERAS) Study group in 2001 and, with a larger group of colleagues, the ERAS Society in 2010. As the Chairman of the Board of the ERAS Society, Ken was instrumental in formulating guidelines for Enhanced Recovery After Surgery and achieved great success, in collaboration with many other members of the Society, in spreading the message worldwide and improving outcomes of patients, exemplified by reduced complications and shorter hospital stays.

Ken was a brilliant speaker and a superb debater; very didactic but also with a wry sense of humour. Besides the eponymous

lectures he was honoured with, he had lectured on all six continents and held his audience with engagement and directness.

We, his colleagues and friends, knew Ken as a man with impeccable integrity, lots of wit and humour, and one who was always there for his friends. Above all, Ken was a family man and his greatest treasures were his wife Marie Fallon and their two children, Christopher and Katie. Marie is the St. Columba's Hospice Chair of Palliative Medicine at the University of Edinburgh and an Honorary Consultant in Palliative Care at Western General Hospital. Together they had a thriving personal and professional partnership. Ken cherished his time with his family and in order to reduce his travels, he would often invite us to his home for discussions and to enjoy the Fearon hospitality: gourmet cooking along with fine wine. Ken was also a keen golfer and was proud of his handicap. He was an avid art collector and could enthral his friends and acquaintances with animated discussions on art, music, cooking and wine. Despite his achievements, Ken remained down to earth and his humility was remarkable.

It is with great sadness that we face the loss of a very close friend, a great mind and an outstanding clinical and academic leader. We are among the many who will miss not only his camaraderie, collaboration and friendship, but also all the laughs and the joy of his lively and spiritual company. Our thoughts are with his loving family.

As spokespersons for your friends and colleagues, Ken, thank you for all that you gave us. We will always treasure your memory.

Conflict of interest

None.

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