

GP Biography

Born: 1950

Education: Scoil Mhuire, Marino, St. Joseph's CBS Fairview, Dublin.

UCD Medical School, Graduated 1974.

Interned in St. Helens UK followed by SHO posts in Ormskirk Hospital, UK, Limerick Regional Hospital, Temple Street Hospital, St. Vincent's Psychiatric Unit, Fairview, Registrar post in Psychiatry, Mater Hospital, Dublin.

Qualifications: MB BCh BAO, DRCOG, DCH, MRCGP, MICGP, Family Planning Cert. Dip. In SEM, MFSEM Ire, MFSEM UK.

Personal: Married with 4 children, 2 boys, 2 girls.

Principal hobby: Association Football, as coach, manager and administrator at club and regional level. Still involved. Between work and football and family, not much time left for anything else, although I would be a voracious reader with music another love.

Career highlight: obtaining Diploma in Spirits & Exercise Medicine at age 56.

Special interest: Sports Medicine.

Personal Reflection:

I started off working in a three man practice which included Dr. Rory O'Hanlon, then a TD and later Minister for Health. Another partner had addiction issues which he had controlled when I started. I quickly learnt that I must be true to myself and not slavishly follow other people's behaviour from a work point of view. I also realised that it was a marathon not a sprint which I had signed up for.

Six years after starting, the practice expanded and two new doctors came on board both of whom I could trust implicitly and to this day they remain true friends. That friendship was probably the most important aspect which provided me with the emotional and professional support through my career and allowed me to enjoy with great satisfaction a career which I never once regretted. Of course, there were challenging and stressful occasions including a complaint to the Medical Council which was totally without foundation but which caused great anxiety at the time.

I served on the board of the NEDOC for three years with part of my remit managing complaints. I also served as secretary of the local branch of the IMO, having been a founder member.

I retired in 2019 after 40 years in General Practice. Obviously, there have been many changes, e.g. computerisation, reduced home visits, increased investigations with blood testing, imaging, endoscopy etc. Also increased complexity of medications. The depth and breadth of general practice has increased dramatically whilst in hospital based medicine the depth has increased whilst the breadth has definitely narrowed.

What I loved about practicing medicine was the personal interaction with patients and also sorting out problems whilst being their advocate and support.

The biggest challenge as a GP was obtaining the appropriate specialist referral for my

patients.

My other career, probably an engineer, (at least that is what our careers guidance teacher told me to do), failing that, a sports journalist, although that is a little fantasy.

Advice to GPs, difficult to say at this point as there has been so much change with COVID. Talking to some colleagues, there has been great frustration at the absence of face-to-face consultations.

Three books, I would need 103 books as I find it unsatisfying to reread a book. But to choose, most of John Steinbeck's, most of John Updike's, most of John McGaherns, definitely Catch 22 which is probably the only book which I have read more than once. Why re-read a book when there are so many more out there to be read.

My pride would be in my work, always giving of my best, did not always get it right, always willing to admit ignorance but always wanting to learn.

My colleagues and I built a purpose built premises back in 1990 without any public money. This building has stood the test of time and is fully functional to this day.

I do not have any heroes from the world of medicine but those I admired most were my colleagues who helped me formulate my way of practicing medicine as a GP and hopefully, allowed me to become a more rounded individual.

Also, my involvement with sport gave me a better attitude towards people and life in general; to quote Albert Camus who played in goal for the Racing Universitaire d'Alger team "all that I know most surely about morality and obligations, I owe to sport."

Finally, regarding COVID, I was marooned in Sneem, my wife being from the village where her father was the local pharmacist and where David Thomas commenced his GP career, from March to June with my wife, son, daughter in law and 2 grandchildren. I could not have had a nicer place to be. For me, it was an extended holiday. Am I not glad that I had retired last year. I would hate to be working in the current situation where there is a paucity of face to face consultations.

I would prefer other people to summarise me but then I might not be entirely pleased with their thoughts and views. I would like to think that I have acquired a sufficient amount of emotional intelligence.

Life is what you make of it, i.e. take the ball on the hop. Life is not a game of perfect. You get out of life what you put into it.

Finis.