

Cursaí taighde: 25 bliain ag fás!

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Nuair a fuairas cuireadh sliocht a scríobh maidir le stair an choláiste ó thaobh cursaí taighde de, bhíos inmíoch nach mbeadh morán suime ag lucht léitheoireachta in a leithéid. Conas gur féidir léitheoir a mhealladh go ábhar nach tarraingteach é don tromlach?

When I was invited to write an article on the history of research activity at the ICGP, my first reaction was one of anxiety. How could I attract readers when my subject is a minority interest?

Cheap mé gur cheart dom scéal éigin a aimsiú i measc na fíricí agus na dátaí, in ionad cur síos foirmiúil ar ar tharla maidir le cursaí taighde ó bhunaidh ár gcoláiste. Dá bhrí sin, céard atá breactha síos agam anseo ná mo dhearcadh pearsanta ar shaothar taighde an Choláiste go dtí an bpointe seo. Is oth liom nach bhfuil ann ach cúntas neamhchuisitheach agus go bhfeadfadh sé bheith neamhchruinn anseo is ansiúd. Óir is trí shúile claonta atáim ag breathnú siar, le buíochas don gColáiste as ucht an fhorbairt pearsanta a soláthraíodh dom agus mé ag saothrú mar oifigeach taighde ar feadh seacht mbliana, mar rúnaí ar coiste taighde ar feadh trí bliana, chomh maith le bheith seal i mo eagarthóir ar Forum.

Thairis sin, tá mo dhearcadh i mbaol an leataobhachas de bharr cliseadh i mo tionscamh taighde pearsanta, agus an tuiscint níos aibí a d'eascair as sin, cé gur ábhairín mall é, i mo chás féin! Faoi dheireadh, tá an Ghaeilge róghnaithe agam mar meán cumarsáide chun éagsúlacht stair ár gColáiste a chur in iúil don léitheoir. Oireann an Ghaeilge den obair ar slíthe eile mar leanas:

It occurred to me that I should seek a story behind the facts and figures instead of attempting a formal history. For this reason, I have chosen to give my personal account of the research life at college. I must confess that being a personal perspective, my account may be inaccurate in places, as I shall be reviewing the college's research history through the biased lens of my own

gratitude. I have had the privilege of being a research fellow for seven years, secretary of the research committee for three years as well as being the medical editor of Forum for three years. Moreover, the personal journey of attempting and failing in research and the maturity, however slow dawning, that comes from this must inevitably colour my account. Finally, I am writing in Irish chiefly to symbolise the unique history of the ICGP among the colleges of family doctors, but there are other reasons, as follows:

Sa chéad dul síos, is féidir comparáid a dhéanamh idir an Ghaeilge agus an gnáthdhochtúireacht sa mhéid gur módhanna oibre ársa iad araon. Ach, tá siad mar an gcéanna, tar éis athbheochaint áirithe a cruthaíonn go bhfuil féideireachataí nua-aimsearacha acu. Thairis sin, tá cosúlachtaí idir saol an foghlaiméora teanga agus an dochtúir teaghlaiigh atá ag dul i ngleic le píosa taighde. Tá siad araon ag streachailt le coincheapanna nua agus le téarmaeolaíocht rúndiamharach.

Tá said araon ag iarraidh greim a bhreith ar duais doiléir, duais nach fiú í an iarracht dar le daoine eile. Sa dá chás, braitheann an taighdeoir go bhfuil dúshlán roimhe nach féidir é a sheachaint cé nach gcuireann an dúshlán céanna isteach a bheag nó a mhór ar dhuine ar bith eile. Níl sé geallta ag ceachtar acu go dtiocfaidh sé i dtír in a chuid iarrachtaí, go mbainfeadh tairbhe ar bith as an tionscnamh agus sa deireadh thiar nach mbeidh ann ach cur amú ama. Ach mar sin féin leanann said araon don obair.

In the first instance, I am struck by the parallel between Irish and family medicine in that they are both ancient methodologies that have enjoyed something of a rebirth. Both venerable and antique institutions have been shown to be fully capable of having a modern role. In addition to this, I cannot escape the comparison between the experience of the language student and the GP setting about a piece of research work. Both struggle with new

concepts and mysterious terminology. Both sense a challenge that cannot be ignored, no matter that no-one else seems to suffer the same urge. Neither is guaranteed success or that his efforts will not merely amount to a waste of time. Both are trying to grasp at a vague reward, a reward that others think is not worth it. Both struggle on against the odds.

Ba dream uailmhianach iad, na daoine a bhunaigh an Cholaiste úr nua seo i 1984. D'fhéadfá a rá gur bhain siad le taobh tuathal an tsaoil, go raibh siad ag snámh in aghaidh an easa. An rud a bhí ar bun acu ná stádas ceart a bhaint amach do réimse leigheis seanbhunaithe na gnáthdhochtúirí, chun a fhéidearthachtaí a chuir chun chinn ionas go mbeadh na buntáistí a bhaineann leis faoi réir do muintir na tíre.

D'aithin said nach féidir dul san iomaíocht mar roinn profisúnta neamhspleách gan bonn tréan taighde. Maraon leis an ngluaiseacht idirnáisiúnta a bhí ar siúil, go mórmhór i Sasana agus sna Stáit Aontaithe, an chéad rud a bhí ag teastáil uathu ná saíocht ársa an ghnáthdhochtúra a mhúnlú i gcruith eolaíoch an lae inniu.

Aithníodh go raibh géar gá le cur síos ar réimse oibre an gnáthdhochtúra, chomh maith le iniúchadh ar a thionchar ar sláinte an phobail. Mar sin, bhí an taighde i measc na h-aidhmeanna a luaitear i mbunreacht an Choláiste. Níl tír gan teanga agus níl chomhthromaíocht acadúil gan taighde ach a oiread!

The college founders were an ambitious lot back in 1984. You could say that they were somewhat revolutionary, shaking up the established order. What were they really about? I think their key drive was to achieve recognition for our ancient branch of medicine, so that its power could be unlocked to the benefit of the population. They had the wisdom to see that they could not achieve professional independence without a solid foundation in research.

Just as with the same movement which was afoot elsewhere, especially in England and the US, an early requirement was to remodel the ancient craft of general practice into the modern scientific mould. That is why you will find research as a feature of the college's constitutional aspirations. Just as the saying goes 'Níl tír gan teanga' – nor is there equality of academic esteem without research.

I dtaca leis an aidhm sin, céard a bhí mar príomhdualgais ag baill an Choláiste ná tabhairt faoi bunthaighde. Ní raibh said sásta ghlacadh le firicí iasachta ó tíortha eile. Bhí orthu cur síos níos cruinne a bhaint amach ar an tseirbhís



Niall Maguidhir – Ba dream uailmhianach iad, na daoine a bhunaigh an Cholaiste úr nua seo i 1984

gnáthdhochtúireachta mar a bhí sé sa bhaile.

B'iad na céad eachtraí taighde de chuid an Choláiste a bhfuil cuimhne agamsa orthu ná na fiosrúcháin a rinneadh ar stádas na seirbhíse le Barry Oliver agus Harry Comber. Bhí an-thábhacht ag baint le iniúchtaí den sórt sin agus stádas mar sáinábhar a cruthú do réimse oibre an ghnáthdhochtúra don chéaduair. Ba mhór an tionchar a chonacthas dá réir.

In pursuit of this research agenda, one of the early ambitions of the college membership was to conduct basic research. It was no longer acceptable to rely on imported statistics. The college had to achieve a more precise description of our native family medicine service. Some of the first research undertakings that I can recall were those of Barry Oliver and Harry Comber on the state of general practice. This kind of work was of vital importance to establishing general practice in Ireland as a specialty. Their influence was witnessed accordingly.

Deirtear gurb iad na oibreacha taighde is tábhachtaí ná iadsan a théann i bhfeidhm ar cleachtadh na gairme nó ar iompair phobail. Mar gheall ar an slí inar tugadh faoi bhunú na h-eagraíochta, luath go leor, bhí dul chun cinn suntasach infheicthe maidir le h-aidhmeanna an choláiste, mar a bhí scríte amach orthu sa 'Blue Book'. Bhí riachtanais taighde lárnach i smaointe na bunaitheoirí agus fuarthas lán tacaíocht

ón mbaillríocht.

It is said that the best research is that which influences practice or public health behaviour. By virtue of the constitution of our college, it was not long before it was having an impact, as envisaged in the 'Blue Book'. The research requirement was central to the thinking behind this and it received the fulsome support of the membership.

Bhí gluaiseacht eile ar siúl chomh maith um an dtaca seo a fuair spreagadh nach beag ón mbaillríocht chéanna. Bunú agus leathnú amach ranna acadúla a bhí i gceist agus d'éirigh go breá leis.

De réir a chéile, cuireadh Ranna Leighis Príomhchuraim ar an fód sna ollscoileanna uile. Ba mhór an cabhair a raibh i ndán don gcoláiste de bharr sin. Ó sin i leith, bhí cinnteacht faoin gcumas taighde a bheadh le fáil ag an gluaiseacht. Sa bhreis ar sin, agus diaidh ar ndiaidh mhéadaigh an lorg fealsúnachta gnáthdhochtúireachta ar curiculam abhair dochtúiri. Beifear ag súil le ábaltacht taighde níos foirfe sa chéad glúin eile.

There was in addition, another movement underway by this stage. The foundation and spread of academic departments of general practice was happening and made great progress. Progressively, departments were established in all the universities, leading to a secure research capacity for the fledgling discipline of general practice. Moreover, the curriculum of the medical schools began to feel the influence of the GP philosophy and one could hope to see a perfected research ability among the next generation of graduates.

Cé go raibh an-chuid spriocanna acadúla bainte amach againn le bhunú na ranna, bhí agus tá fós, dualgas áirithe ar an gcoláiste soláthar a dhéanamh ar an doctúir teaghlaigh a bhfuil suim aige nó aici tabhairt faoi taighde agus nach fonn air a shlí bheatha a iompú go h-iomlán i dtreo saol acadúil. Sé sin le rá, go bhfuil sé mar aidhm ag an gColáiste, deiseanna a cruthú don gnáthdhochtúir i gcoiteann, tabhairt faoi stáidéar agus é i mbun a chuid oibre laethiúil. Ós rud é gur rud riachtanach é do gach dochtúir bheith in ann seasamh siar chun meabhrú ar éifeacht a chuid iarrachtaí, tá tionscnamh taighde éigeantach chun oiliúint mar dochtúir teaghlaigh a críochnú. Is é an coláiste an t-udaráis thar ceann cursaí oilúna agus glactar go bhfuil gá le oilteacht taighde taobh istigh den choláiste dá bharr.

Many of the academic aims of the college had been achieved with the establishment of these university departments. However,

there was then and remains a duty within the college to cater to the ordinary GP who wishes to undertake research, without leaving practice for an academic life. It remains an ambition at the college to create research opportunities for service GPs. Also, as it is a requirement of GP training to undertake research, and given the college's role as the supervising body for GP education, it is important for the college itself to retain an internal research capacity.

Mar sin, in ainneoin an dul chun cinn sna ollscoileanna, bhí an coláiste de shíor ag iarraidh clár oibre dá chuid féin a chomhlíonadh. Don chuid is mó, ba é an coiste taighde an t-inneall taobh thiar de sin, agus fuair sé i gconaí tacaíocht fial ón bhfeidhmeannacht an choláiste. I measc na dtionscainmh a n-airítear anseo tá an t-ollfiontar faoi cúram do dhaoine aosta (the Care of the Elderly Project) a bhí faoi stúir an coiste agus Sheila Prosser. D'earcaíodh Sheila mar cheann de na chéad compánaigh a fostaíodh sa choláiste, chun tabhairt faoi obair ar leith, agus dar liom gurb mór do leas an choláiste an módh oibre sin. Ar bonn leanúnach chuireadh ar siúil scéimeana chun tairbhí nua do bhaill an choláiste a sholáthair agus forbairt a dhéanamh ar spriocanna na heagraíochta. Lena linn sin, bunaíodh gréasan d'oifigigh taighde chun freastal a dhéanamh ar pé obair taighde nó iniúchadh a bhí ar siúil ag baill den choláiste. Mhair an scéim sin, inar ghlac mé pairt ann, ar feadh naoi mbliana agus bhí cuigear dinn ar fud na tíre i mbarr a réime. Tá sé deacair go leor tomhas cruinn a dhéanamh ar thoradh na scéime sin, ach go h-áirithe mar gheall ar gur obair mall é an taighde agus nach gcuirtear cuid mhaith tionscnaimh i gcrích riamh, is cuma cé chomh dílis an taighdeóir nó iadsan atá ag tacú leis.

For all of these reasons, notwithstanding the achievements of the universities, college has its own research agenda. The research committee is the driver for most of this activity and has always had the support of the college executive. Among the projects that the committee has promoted, of particular note must be the Care of the Elderly Project that was run by Sheila Prosser. Sheila was the one of the first fellows to be appointed by the college to undertake a particular task.

To my mind these appointments were of great importance in bringing to fruition various projects that achieved the aims of the organisation. Around this time, the college also established a network of research fellows, of which I was one. This scheme lasted for nine years and at its height employed five of us around

Ag breathnú siar dom, tá éacht oibre deanta againn le fiche cuig bliain anuas

the country. It is difficult to measure the impact of this particular scheme, given the slow pace at which research is undertaken and the fact that many projects are never completed despite the best efforts of the researcher or his supporters.

Ba chúis mhór mórtais don choláiste an taispéantas a cuireadh faoi bhráid an domhan mhóir ag WONCA 98, agus ceapaim go cuidigh an scéim oifigigh taighde le lámh mhaith a dhéanamh den chomhdháil de bharr an réimse leathan tionscnaimh taighde a bhí le fáil ann. Tugaim moladh agus míle buíochas do Fionán Ó Cuinneagain, an Doc. Michael Boland, an tOllamh Andrew Murphy agus an coiste eagraithe uile, gan trácht ach ar roinnt beag dóibh siúd a bhí i gceannas ar an ócáid.

The WONCA conference in 1998 was a landmark occasion for the college and showcased the ICGP in the wider world. I believe the research fellowship scheme helped make this conference a success by virtue of the range of domestic projects that were on display. Much credit must go to Fionan O Cuineagain, Michael Boland and Professor Andrew Murphy as well as the whole organising committee, to mention but a few of those who made such a success of the event.

Ar ndóigh, más ceilliúradh ar dea-obair an choláiste ab ea WONCA, casadh i dtreo saothar níos fadtearmaí a bhí ann chomh maith. Um an dtaca sin, buíochas le fíis na mbunaitheoirí, go speisialta agus trí thionchar na bhfondúireacht um taighde agus oilúna agus obair a rinneadh Liam Lacey agus a leitheid chun an fondúireacht a cruthú, bhí lár ionad nua don gcoláiste agus tús curtha leis an ttonad Achmainní Iarchéime (PRC), faoi stiúir ag an Michael Boland.

Is tríd an ttonad don cuid is mó a leanann obair profisiúnta taighde an Choláiste anois. Tá ceithre taigheoirí fostaithe idir postanna lán agus pairtimsire maraon leis na dochtúirí agus eile atá rannpáirteach san obair mar compáinigh ar scéimeanna áirithe.

Of course, WONCA was not just a celebration of the College's achievements, but marked the transition to an longer-term vision of the college's future. By this time, thanks to the foresight of the founders, especially through the efforts of the Foundation for Research and Education and the work of Liam Lacey and others,

the college had a new headquarters and a new Postgraduate Resource Centre under the leadership of Michael Boland.

It is the PRC which delivers the bigger part of the college's academic output now. There are four research posts as well as doctors and others participating as fellows in a variety of roles and schemes.

Bíodh sin mar atá, beidh fáilte go deo roimh éinne atá i mbun fiosrúchan as a stuama féin. Tá suim agus lámh chuidithe fial le fáil ag cibé ball den choláiste a mbeadh fonn air tabhairt faoi tionscnamh taighde, gan trácht ar deontaisí. Tá teacht ar sáinchoimhairle ó thaobh foinsí eolais de a buíochas sin ar na leabharlannaí agus ó thaobh leagann amach na h-oibre agus anailís de ón Claire Collins, stiúrthóir taighde an choláiste. Tá fáilte roimh iarratais ar measúnú eiteiciúil ón gcoiste um eitic taighde, faoi stiúir an t-Ollamh Colin Bradley, áit ina faightear comhairle agus cabhair sa bhreis ar moltóireacht eiteiciúil. Tá Forum againn mar idirmheán cumarsáide agus suíomh idirlíonn nach sáródh áit ar bith eile.

Nonetheless, college will always welcome enquiries from a member setting about a personal research project. Generous help and encouragement, not to mention grants are available. The researcher will find expert advice on the literature from our librarians and on research design from Claire Collins, the director of research at the PRC. Ethical review as well as sound research advice can be had from the research ethics committee, which is chaired by Professor Colin Bradley. We have Forum and our website as means of communication; that must be unsurpassed elsewhere.

Ní féidir gach duine a lua anseo a d'fhág a lorg ar cursaí taighde ár gColáiste. Tá roinnt dóibh ar shlí na fírinne anois agus ainmeacha cáiliúla ina measc, beannacht Dé lena n-anamacha. Ag breathnú siar dom, tá éacht oibre déanta againn le fiche cuig bliain anuas.

I could not hope to mention each and every person whose mark has been left on the research story at college. Some of them, some famous names among them, are no longer with us, may they rest in peace. Looking back on it, I cannot but think that we have have all done a power of work these past 25 years.