

Fifteen Minutes with a Surgeon

Professor John Vincent Reynolds

WHAT WAS YOUR ROUTE FROM MEDICAL SCHOOL TO YOUR PRESENT POSITION IN ANATOMY?

I completed my primary medical degree at University College Dublin in 1981 (MB. B.Ch. BAO). In 1985 I achieved my Fellowship at the Royal College of Surgeons of Ireland (FRCSI) and in 1990 I obtained my higher degree, a Masters of Surgery (MCh).

My time abroad was spent initially as a Research Fellow in the hospital of the University of Pennsylvania and the Wistar Institute, Philadelphia, between 1986 and 1988. In 1990, I was a lecturer at St. Mary's Hospital, London and Imperial College. Between 1993 and 1994 I took up an International clinical Fellowship in Surgical Oncology in the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Centre, New York. I was Senior Lecturer at the University of Leeds before returning to Ireland.

IS MEDICINE IN YOUR FAMILY AND HAVE YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO BE A DOCTOR?

No, I am the only doctor in a large family, we have no shortage of lawyers. I didn't think deeply about careers when at school in Templeogue College, and would have been happy with any of the health sciences or law. I chose dentistry and did one year before switching to medicine.

WHY DID YOU DECIDE UPON SURGERY?

I decided upon a surgical career in my first clinical year in medicine at St. Vincent's Hospital. I enjoyed the dynamics and excitement of the operating room, the emergency room, and critical care settings. I have always been very interested in cancer, and may have been a medical oncologist if I had not chosen surgery. I would also have been very happy, I think, as an academic scientist, again most probably with a focus on cancer. As a professor of surgery, I have an opportunity to combine surgery, cancer, and cancer research, and am very content with this mix of the art and science of my discipline.

WHAT RESEARCH ARE YOU CURRENTLY INVOLVED IN?

I am currently involved in a number of projects including: assessing the role of antioxidants in inflammation to cancer pathway in the oesophagus; using genomics and proteomics to help predict the response of cancer to preoperative chemotherapy and radiation therapy and studies of visceral adiposity and metabolic syndrome in cancer patients.

WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE SURGICAL OPERATIONS?

Thyroidectomy, oesophagectomy and Whipple resections are nice technical operations where precise anatomical sharp dissections are required.



Professor John Vincent Reynolds is Professor of Surgery in Trinity College Dublin since 2001. He is also Regional Director for Cancer Services in South-West Dublin, a Principal Investigator at Dublin Molecular Medicine Centre and Scientific Director of the Cancer Clinical Trials Consortium.

WHAT DO YOU DO IN YOUR FREE TIME?

During school and college days I was involved in a number of sports including soccer, rugby, gaelic games and tennis. Now I play lousy tennis and golf. I read a lot in my spare time, in particular history and science.

HAVE YOU HAD ANY REGRETS TO DATE?

I have no regrets in my career. I did, however, give up the piano in at the age of thirteen after eight years of lessons. I had completed all the grades up until then, but decided to devote all my time to getting signed by Liverpool F.C. - that was a mistake.

FINALLY HAVE YOU ANY ADVICE FOR JUNIOR DOCTORS AND MEDICAL STUDENTS?

It is difficult to give general advice as the career spectrum is so broad. This is one of the reasons why I switched early from dentistry. For anyone who truly loves the surgical environment as a student and is prepared to put in the hours, back yourself and stick with it. When weighed against the satisfaction and privilege of professional life that surgery affords, the career path is not as arduous as many students and young doctors imagine.