

Professor Barry Cox D.Sc. FRPharm.S.

Professor Barry Cox graduated with a BSc first class Honours in Pharmacy (Special Option in Pharmacology) at Manchester University in 1961. In 1963 he was awarded an MSc, in Pharmacology by the University of Manchester for a Thesis entitled “The interactions of sympathomimetic drugs on rabbit auricles” and in 1968 he was awarded a PhD by the same university for a thesis entitled “Some pharmacological actions of three tremorgenic drugs.” Barry was a lecturer and researcher in pharmacology at Manchester University Medical School at the same time as the late John Fozard. He attained a readership in 1978 following a sabbatical year as Visiting Associate Professor in Pharmacology at the University of California Los Angeles. In 1979 he joined ICI Pharmaceuticals as Project Team Leader in neuropharmacology where Barry and I championed the 5-HT project for ten productive and fun years.

Barry’s outstanding knowledge of drug discovery and development led him to develop an innovative analytical tool at Zeneca that was years ahead of its time, to compare the relative merits of research projects; evaluating the relative merits of research projects, strength of the hypothesis, feasibility to test it, lead identification, ease of synthesis, clinical need and market attractiveness - that were competing for resources and funding. Such innovative intelligence (ii) analytical tools have now become the cornerstone of modern-day drug discovery and developmentⁱ.

In 1998, when he retired, his position was International Portfolio and Operations Manager in Research & Development at Zeneca Pharmaceuticals. During this period, he was appointed Honorary Professor Welsh School of Pharmacy, University of Wales College of Cardiff and Honorary Professor in Cardiovascular Pharmacology, University of Sunderland. He served on the Committee of the British Pharmacological Society and on the Science Committee of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, and he was Science Chairman in 1988-89.

He was a long serving member of the British Pharmacological Society and past member of the committee (1988-91). His contributions to pharmacology both as a Professor, reader, lecturer, external examiner, leading academic and industrial scientist/international manager in the pharmaceutical industry (Manchester University, ICI Pharmaceuticals Plc, and Zeneca) and inventor on several patents. He made significant impact in the field of pharmacology, in particular in the clinical development of selective 5-HT₂ receptor antagonists (ICI169369 & ICI170809) for CNS disorders.

Barry published extensively (over 120) and held editorial positions for many of the leading pharmacology journals and is a Fellow and past Chairman of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society. He has supervised more than 20 candidates for MPhil/PhD both in academia and Zeneca and acted as an external examiner for MPhil /PhD candidates since 1968 and was visiting Honorary Professor at Sunderland and Cardiff. Peter Roberts remembers him best for his supportive role when he was setting up MSc/BSc placements in the industry for many years.

Barry was recognised as an outstanding communicator, he was a larger than life character, bon viveur and raconteur, with a rapier-wit and an erudite command of the English language and prose. He was a classical storyteller who embellished every detail, ‘true or false’ and became a legendary after dinner speaker. He relished the stage-lights during his talks and as recounted by a Zeneca colleague – he often said, ‘when the lights came on as he opened the fridge door he was on-stage again!

His communication skills transcended from industry leaders to negotiating the terms of the deal with hard-knock kids on the streets near his beloved Manchester City ground, who offered to mind his car and leave it in one-piece...

Professor Cox passed away in August following a challenging neurodegenerative illness, but his sense of humour prevailed to the end with the playing of "Smoke gets in your eyes," at the end of his funeral. He will be sadly missed by many pharmacologists around the world who owe so much to his mentorship and passion for pharmacology.

Tom Blackburn Ph.D., D.Sc., HonsFBPhS., FRSB.

Past President of the British Pharmacological Society

ⁱ Islei, G., Lockett, G., Cox, B. & Stratford, M. A. decision support system using judgemental modelling: a case of R&D in the pharmaceutical industry. IEEE Trans. Eng. Management 38, 202–209 (1991).