

**Dr Gordon MacCallum FRCPsych,
Vice President of the Royal College of Psychiatrists (1986 –1988)**

Q. How many years did you work in psychiatry and where did you spend the bulk of your career?

I worked 40 years full time in psychiatry followed by 5+ years approximately later. Most of it was based at Purdysburn Hospital.

Q. Who or what inspired your career in psychiatry?

I intended to become a neurosurgeon. Whilst waiting for an appropriate training post to turn up I did temporary psychiatry jobs. I had read of a new drug which had possible curative possibilities in France. I used it - Chlorpromazine (Largactil) and its effects on patients changed my life.

Q. What do you consider to be your greatest achievements?

My efforts at promoting Liaison Psychiatry at RVH and also contributing to the advancement of post graduate psychiatry in N Ireland. When I was aged 7 attending the little country school of 20 pupils, aged between 5 and 13, an inspector visited the school. He enquired as to what each of us wanted to be. The answers included being famous, being a shop attendant, a pig farmer, an accountant etc. When I announced that I was going to be a neurosurgeon they laughed heartily. I didn't quite get to being that, but I think I did better in becoming Vice President of the College. That's my proudest achievement.

Q. What or who has made the greatest impact on you?

Dr Denis Leigh who was my consultant when I was at the Maudsley Hospital in London – and our friendship afterwards.

Q. What message would you like to send to our politicians and commissioners today about mental health?

Remember the saying "Out of sight, out of mind". The patient often can't speak for himself; you need to look for disadvantages which don't appear on the system.

Q. What message would you give to trainees in psychiatry that might inform their practice?

Empathy with your patient and relatives is every bit as important as intelligence and knowledge. If you are doing your job you will feel drained entirely occasionally.

Q. What message do you have for the College?

We are doctors and we must take strength from that. It was to promote the health and wellbeing of patients that we entered medicine.

Q. What is your idea of a perfect mental health care service?

It involves harmony across the medical service, both consultants and other members of medicine and general practitioners. Equally important is involvement with social services, psychologists etc.

Q. Which Psychiatrist, living or dead, do you most admire?

Dr Denis Leigh, my consultant at the Institute of Psychiatry and Dr James Mullinger, my first boss. James had been a POW and drew on his dismal experiences to treat his patients.

Q. Which book/text/research publication has had the greatest influence on your work?

A variety of published books, the main theme being on getting the patient to tell you about what is important without asking direct questions.

Q. Who was your Honorary Secretary?

Dr Peter Curran who initially was a trainee with me and became a first-class Consultant Psychiatrist.