

## Prof Drumm's Citation of Professor Conor Ward

We honour Professor Conor Ward today because of his contribution to medicine specifically paediatric medicine, to medical education and research. However, it is more accurate and more important to emphasise that UCD bestows this recognition upon him because of his remarkable contribution to caring for sick children and their



families. Conor Ward was born in 1923 in County Monaghan; the son of a medical doctor who was also a successful national politician and member of Dail Eireann. His academic prowess was obvious from his time at secondary school in St Macartan's College where in 1939 he obtained 1st place nationally in Irish language and literature in the leaving certificate examination. His dedication to the Irish language continued as an undergraduate at UCD where as a medical student he won the gold medal for debating in Irish, became auditor of An Cumann Gaelach and Editor of An Iodh Morainn, the Irish language annual. Here was a student who identified with the concept of a university education through the eyes of Newman, as intellectual culture in the widest sense.

Following graduation in 1946, Conor spent 7 years in Liverpool at the world-renowned Alder Hey Children's Hospital. In 1956 he was appointed Paediatrician and Paediatric cardiologist at the newly founded Our lady's Hospital for Sick Children in Crumlin, Dublin. In 1970 he was appointed Professor of Paediatrics at UCD.

As a clinician and teacher, Conor Ward's contributions to UCD, Ireland and the wider world have been outstanding. He is internationally recognised for his work on identifying a disorder of electrical conductance in the heart, that can lead to irregularities of the heartbeat and sudden death. The international medical community acknowledged his pioneering work by attaching his name to this condition which is now called Ward-Romano syndrome.

As the first pediatric cardiologist in Ireland and one of the first internationally he spearheaded the development of cardiology and cardiac surgery services for children in Ireland. At that time children with what would now be considered relatively minor cardiac abnormalities frequently died because of failure to diagnose their condition and even when diagnosed the absence of any capacity to repair the defect. Conor being a superb diagnostician immediately solved the first problem, identifying cardiac defects in ill babies. His challenge however was to build a system that could repair these anomalies in the architecture of the child's heart. There was little experience of operating on the heart and in children with their tiny hearts and often complex structural defects proposing surgical intervention seemed to many to be science fiction.

The scope of this citation does not allow for adequate representation of the role he played in establishing cardiology and cardiac surgery service for children in Ireland. It is important to note that this became a family endeavor. Conor's wife Pauline, who is with us here today was a skilled nurse. Conor recruited her to care for these critically sick children following their surgery in Crumlin. This was pioneering work, demanding that he and Pauline spend many of their waking hours at the hospital. His leadership resulted in cardiac services for children in Ireland becoming equal to or better than those which pertained in any other country. He demanded excellence from everybody involved which he saw as imperative in terms of what children and their families should expect from those who cared for them. There are centres internationally who could have avoided subsequent well-publicised calamities relating to children with heart defects if they were led by somebody with his commitment to excellence, even when demanding it resulted in unpopularity.



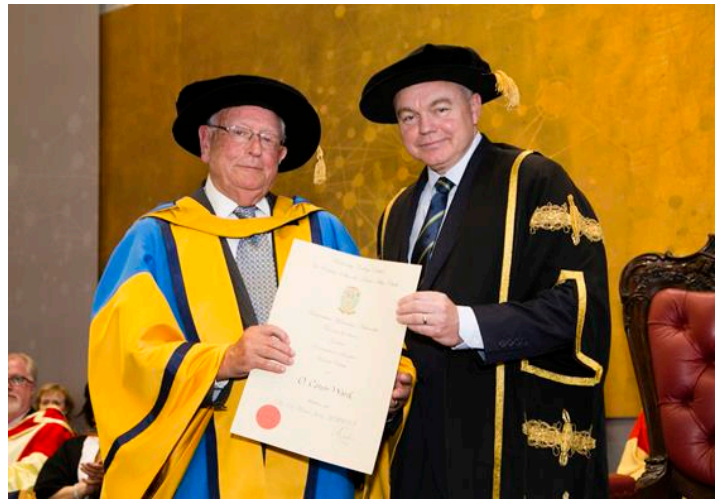
Conor Ward the carer and Conor Ward the teacher are inextricably intertwined. I was not a graduate of UCD and when following Conor's retirement I was appointed as Professor of Paediatrics at UCD and Crumlin, I sought opinions on the department from UCD graduates who I had known over many years working in Canada. The consistency of their response was remarkable in relation to the inspirational effect Connor had through his teaching and especially their observing his caring for children and their Parents.

He championed the cause of children and families who had conditions that were often misunderstood by society, Down's syndrome and Sudden Infant Death. His care for children with Down's syndrome resulted in him receiving lifetime service awards from the Down's syndrome Associations in Ireland and the UK. Through his research and writing, (including a PhD undertaken after his retirement) he is identified as the preeminent authority on the life of John Langdon Down who described the syndrome. His work with families following Sudden Infant has resulted in a much better understanding of the importance of ongoing support for these families long after the tragic event. Conor Ward, Irish scholar, skilled and caring paediatrician, irrepensible advocate for sick children and their parents, inspirational teacher, we salute you in your 93rd year.

*Praehonorabilis Praeses, totaque Universitas, Praesento vobis hunc meum filium, quem scio tam moribus quam doctrina habilem et idoneum esse qui admittatur, honoris causa, ad Gradum Doctoratus Scientiae; idque tibi fide mea testor ac spondeo, totique Academiae.*

Thu, 2 June 16 22:44

Distinguished UCD Medicine alumnus, Professor Conor Ward (UCD Medicine 1946) was conferred with a degree of Doctor of Science *honoris causa* at the 2016 UCD Medicine Conferring Ceremony at UCD O'Reilly Hall on the 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2016. Professor Ward, Emeritus UCD Professor of Paediatrics was conferred with the degree by UCD President, Professor Andrew J Deeks in recognition of his services to paediatric cardiology, medical education and clinical research. Prior to the award, a citation was read by Professor Brendan Drumm who succeeded Professor Ward as UCD Professor of Paediatrics at Our Lady's Children's Hospital Crumlin. Prof Drumm noted, It is more accurate and more important to emphasise that UCD bestows this recognition upon him because of his remarkable contribution to caring for sick children and their families.



*Mrs Pauline Ward and Prof Conor Ward (UCD Medicine 1946) with their grandson Dr Cian Ward (UCD Medicine 2016)* The day was particularly special given that Prof Ward's grandson, Dr Cian Ward was among the UCD Class of 2016 who



were conferred with Medicine (MB BCh BAO) degrees. The newly conferred graduates gave Prof Ward a standing ovation after he received his scroll from Prof Deeks. Prof Drumm's citation, presented below, gives a brief insight into this outstanding doctor who together with his wife Pauline and colleagues, transformed the lives many young children with cardiac arrhythmias. We were delighted that Pauline and the extended Ward family were able to join the celebrations.