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Professor Roger Buckley

BM BCh, MA, PhD, FRCS, Hon FRCOphth, Hon FCOptom

1945-2022

Professor Roger John Buckley, who died on 12th October 2022, was an outstanding ophthalmologist who made significant contributions to medical contact lens practice and was instrumental in fostering inter-professional collaborative working between ophthalmologists, optometrists and contact lens practitioners.

Roger qualified in Medicine from the University of Oxford and St Thomas' Hospital Medical School. His first ophthalmology appointment was as House Surgeon to Sir Harold Ridley. On completing his ophthalmology training, he was appointed as a Consultant Ophthalmologist at Moorfields Eye Hospital in 1981 and served as the Director of its Contact Lens and Prosthesis Department from 1983-1996., taking over from Professor Montague Ruben.

Roger's principal role at this time was, and continued to be, delivery of the highest quality corneal transplantation surgery which often would have been the only option available to a young person with keratoconus facing an uncertain future. Under such stressful circumstances, Roger's care and compassion was a crucial element of the process and in many ways, as important as the technical procedure. This was a hugely challenging area of clinical expertise, and one which was going through a period of major change. Apart from his innovative surgical skills, which were second to none, his research into corneal anatomy and physiology was an invaluable contribution to the understanding of corneal metabolism before and following corneal transplantation.

The 1980's was also an exciting period in the history of contact lens practice. Many manufacturing and material science advances were underway, but mostly just in their early stages. In conjunction with these far-reaching technical improvements, what could only be described as root and branch clinical practice changes were an urgent requirement.

Roger's background on his appointment to the Contact Lens and Prosthesis Department included very little if any contact lens clinical practice experience. He certainly would not have claimed to be a "hands on" contact lens practitioner at the time. The perception within ophthalmological circles could at best be described as sceptical, and there were discussions challenging the need for such a service within the hospital eye service. However, on taking up the post, his appreciation of its clinical value and how it could be further developed was immediate. Even with ever increasing and demanding surgical responsibilities, he coordinated contact lens research and the development of clinical skills. At all times he encouraged initiative and forged together a team of specialist practitioners to best meet the expanding and transforming scope for contact lens practice. His enthusiasm for promotion of the clinical science of contact lens practice was persuasive and highly effective, achieving the recognition it deserved and which we all now take for granted.

In 1997, Roger was appointed Bausch & Lomb Professor of Ocular Medicine at City, University of London, the first chair of its kind within a UK optometry department. Whilst at City, Roger balanced teaching and research with his NHS work at Moorfields. Upon his retirement from Moorfields in 2004, his chair was transferred to Anglia Ruskin University and maintained his clinical work as an Honorary Consultant Ophthalmologist at Addenbrooke's Hospital in Cambridge.

Professor Buckley was President of the British Contact Lens Association (BCLA) from 2003-4 and Chairman of its Academic Committee. He was also president of the Medical Contact Lens and Ocular Surface Association (MCLOSA) from 1989-92. Roger chaired or was a member of numerous advisory committees relating to contact lens standards, safety of medicines and surgical materials. He served for twenty years on the General Optical Council, where he was the founding Chairman of its Standards Committee.

Away from ophthalmology, Roger was an accomplished musician and was an international authority on the British composer Frederick Delius. In 2017, Roger completed a doctoral thesis in music by completing an in-depth critical analysis of one of Delius's notebooks.

Roger would never in any way sing his own praises: his achievements and his standard of his work were plain to see and spoke volumes. His enduring memory will remain for a long time to come with his former colleagues, and by so many patients who benefitted from his dedication.

John Lawrenson and Ken Pullum

January 2023