

Dr Maeve Leonard (Ryan) 1968–2015



The medical community of the SouthWest and deliriumologists worldwide are saddened to learn of the recent untimely passing of Dr Maire ‘Maeve’ Leonard-Ryan, Senior Research Fellow and Lecturer at the Graduate Entry Medical School at the University of Limerick (UL). Maeve was an immensely popular individual who straddled the worlds of clinical practice, teaching and research, thereby providing endless encouragement and inspiration to all she encountered. One of four children to Diarmuid and Dolores, she grew up in Limerick and was educated at Crescent College before undertaking her undergraduate training at University College Galway where she completed her studies in 1992 with an honours degree.

Psychiatry was her calling and Maeve duly entered postgraduate training through the West of Ireland rotational scheme. She obtained the Membership of the Royal College of Psychiatrists at her first attempt in 1997 before moving to Queen’s Medical Centre in Nottingham to undertake higher specialist training in Psychiatry. Thereafter, she returned to Ireland in 2005 and completed her training at the Midwestern Regional Hospital. Once aptly described as a ‘tsunami of positivity’, Maeve was immensely popular with her patients and colleagues as a dedicated and compassionate clinician. Over time, she became increasingly specialised in consultation-liaison psychiatry

contributing her expert opinion to the care of thousands of patients at the University Hospital Limerick and Milford Hospice over the decade following her return.

Maeve then undertook a crucial role in the establishment of the Graduate Entry Medical School in a variety of positions in the problem-based learning programme and clinical psychiatry. It was in this role as a teacher that she particularly excelled, maintaining a strong family tradition of pedagogy, and is remembered fondly for her remarkable capacity to bring out the best in others. The first five cycles of medical graduates through UL were privileged to receive the bulk of their face-to-face teaching and mentoring from such a gifted teacher and she was repeatedly identified by them as an inspirational teacher and role model. Along with colleagues in Psychiatry, Maeve produced a series of case-based teaching resources that form the mainstay of structured teaching for final year medical students at UL and which forms a textbook that will inevitably be completed by her colleagues. Undoubtedly, across the globe patients under the care of her former students are benefitting from her dedicated and thoughtful teaching style, and her encouragement of their appreciation of mental illness and its treatment. Maeve will be remembered as one of the crucial champions of the medical school during its formative years.

All through this time Maeve was a prolific researcher with a particular interest in neuropsychiatric symptoms in patients with severe physical illness. Her work in the field of delirium, which includes almost 50 peer-reviewed publications, contributed substantially to our understanding of how to best assess and manage psychiatric symptoms in hospitalised patients. Maeve had a particular interest in managing neuropsychiatric disorders in palliative care patients contributing some of her most highly cited work that frequently featured in journals such as the *British Medical Journal* and the *British Journal of Psychiatry*. She completed an MD at NUIG (2009) through these efforts entitled ‘A longitudinal study of neuropsychiatric and cognitive symptoms in palliative care inpatients developing delirium and related conditions’. Our understanding of the phenomenology of delirium was substantially enhanced by her many scrupulously conducted scientific contributions.

In 2010, Maeve progressed to supervise the Cognitive Impairment Research Team at UL where she was nicknamed ‘*SuperMaeve*’ by her PhD students for her dedication and ability to melt mountains with her energy and determination. Maeve regularly presented her work at meetings across Europe and North America

and has been an active contributor to the European Delirium Association during its decade of existence. Her return after successfully achieving a remission from her illness for the Cremona meeting in 2014 was a moment of great celebration for the EDA community, but unfortunately her recovery was to be short-lived. Her considerable contribution to this field will be recognised in the establishment of the 'Leonard prize' for best new researcher at the annual EDA conference. Similarly, her dedication to promoting academic effort at the Graduate Entry Medical School will be recognised in an annual prize for best new research at the annual Psychiatry study day. Maeve is sorely missed by

the many scientific colleagues that she developed across the globe but will undoubtedly be remembered for many years to come for her contributions to an understudied but important area of healthcare.

A devoted mother of three sons – Tom, Daire and John, and loving wife to Cathal, her untimely loss followed a brave and determined battle with illness. She passed away peacefully at Milford Hospice on the 10 September. For those who had the pleasure of working alongside Maeve, it was a privilege to share space and time with such a committed altruist.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a hanam