



Professor Lauren Kerzin-Storarr Obituary

It is with great sadness that we write this obituary about Lauren who died on 1st November 2022, 14 years after her cancer diagnosis. She was a great friend, mentor, role model and an inspiration to many of us, and she will be very much missed.

Lauren completed her Masters in Genetic Counselling at the University of California, Berkeley. Dr Seymour Kessler was programme director at the time. He was a pioneer of the integration of counselling skills into genetic counselling practice and research, and this had a lasting impact on Lauren's approach to clinical work and her research interests. During her MSc, Lauren undertook an elective at St Andrews University where she met her husband, David. A move to the UK followed, and her first post was as a research associate at Ninewells Hospital investigating familial factors in Hodgkin's disease. She then moved to Manchester, working with Professor Rodney Harris and Professor Dian Donnai. This proved to be a turning point in the development of the genetic counselling profession in the UK.

Lauren quickly impressed medical and non-medical colleagues with her clinical skills and her ability to support individuals and families living with genetic conditions. She helped to establish the North West Genetic Family Register Service, a systematic way of offering genetic counselling to extended family members for conditions such as HD and DMD. Lauren launched the first Master level training programme for genetic counsellors in Europe at the University of Manchester in 1992, initially co-directing with Dr David Craufurd. This MSc opened the profession up to individuals from diverse academic and professional backgrounds. Lauren continued as programme director for 20 years, and will be remembered for her intellect, enthusiasm, and drive to champion, support and bring out the best in each student. Former students and colleagues describe her as inspirational, and as still shaping their approach to clinical work and their professional development.

Lauren was a leader in genetic counselling in the UK, Europe and internationally. She supported the launch of other MSc in Genetic Counselling programmes. She also represented the UK on the Board of the Transnational Alliance of Genetic Counsellors. Lauren's role and drive as co-chair of the European Meeting on Psychosocial Aspects of Genetics, EMPAG, and her collaboration with colleagues in mainland Europe (including Professor Gerry Evers-Kiebooms and Professor Aad Tibben) led to this being integrated into the ESHG conference, and in turn to a higher profile for ethical, legal and psychosocial issues at the conference.

Voluntary registration of genetic counsellors in the UK began in 2002. In the same year Lauren, along with Chris Barnes, Professor Chris Patch and Professor Heather Skirton,

prepared a proposal on behalf of the AGNC to expand training capacity for genetic counsellors. The Department of Health subsequently granted funding for 50 training posts to meet a Government White Paper commitment to enlarge the genetic counsellor workforce to help address the increased pressure on genetic services.

Lauren retired from clinical work in 2012. She went on to establish and co-direct the PGCert Clinical Genetics and Genetic Counselling with Professor Tao Wang in 2016. This was a collaboration between the University of Manchester and the Peking University Health Science Centre in Beijing to support the development of a professional specialism of Genomic Medicine in China. It has delivered training in clinical genetic and genetic counselling skills to doctors and other healthcare professionals in China.

In a recent interview reflecting on the evolution of genetic counselling, Lauren spoke about the importance of 'contingency' and how key developments in the profession are rooted in people and things that have happened in the past. Our profession owes a huge debt to Lauren, and her legacy will continue through her many colleagues and students.

Lauren's family was her number one priority, and we join in expressing our deep condolences to David, Josh, Greg and Katherine.