

# *A visionary who made a lasting contribution*

Patrick Johnston, medical oncologist 1958–2017

The European School of Oncology has lost a supporter, colleague and friend, writes **Mike Clarke**, who co-chaired ESO's Systematic Reviews Masterclass alongside Patrick Johnston.



**W**ith the sudden and unexpected death of Patrick Johnston on 4 June 2017, the world of cancer has lost an internationally renowned researcher and practitioner, and Queen's University Belfast in Northern Ireland lost its President and Vice-Chancellor. The loss to his wife Iseult and four sons Seamus, Eoghan, Niall and Ruairi is, of course, so much greater, and we extend our deepest condolences to them.

Professor Patrick Johnston, who was instantly recognised by many people in Queen's whenever anyone referred simply to "Paddy", had been working closely with ESO for some time. He co-chaired our 2014 and 2016 Masterclasses on Systematic Reviews, welcoming the participants to Belfast and enthusing them with tales of how his career had seen the growth in the importance of systematic reviews for both practice and research. His death came just as plans were being put in place to stage the third of these popular and successful courses, in Belfast in May 2018.

Paddy was born in Derry, Northern Ireland, on 14 September 1958, and died during a cycling trip in Donegal on 4 June 2017. He studied medicine at University College Dublin, where he graduated in 1982 and obtained an MD in 1988. He took up a Fellowship at the National Cancer Institute in USA, working on molecular pharmacology, drug resistance and drug development, and was awarded the ASCO Young Investigator Award and the Technology Award. Paddy then returned to Northern Ireland and, in 1996, became Professor and Head of the Department of Oncology at Queen's University Belfast and the Belfast City Hospital.

He led efforts to modernise cancer practice and research in Northern Ireland and was fundamental to the opening

of the new Centre for Cancer Research and Cell Biology at Queen's in 2007 – the same year that he was appointed Dean of the School of Medicine, Dentistry and Biomedical Sciences. Amongst several awards, Paddy won the international Bob Pinedo Cancer Care Prize in 2013, in recognition of his work to translate discovery science into practice. He co-chaired the European Cancer Concord, leading to the European Cancer Patient's Bill of Rights, which was launched at the European Parliament in 2014.

Paddy opened the first of the ESO Masterclasses on Systematic Reviews in June 2014, shortly after becoming the 12th President and Vice-Chancellor of Queen's University Belfast. It was a not too unusual summer's day in Belfast, with pouring rain, and after giving his formal welcome, Paddy had to go on to fulfil one of the many aspects of his new role at a University rowing regatta. However, as President and Vice-Chancellor, Paddy did so much more than preside over such events. He was instrumental in creating an ambitious vision for the university into the 2020s, striving to boost its global reputation and stature, and laying the foundations for his successors.

Paddy's legacy will continue to be felt in the growth of Queen's University Belfast, the improved care of people with cancer, and the achievements of the students and colleagues he inspired. Paddy was a man with a vision and with the drive to achieve it. His early death means that he will sadly not be here to see it delivered. As one of Queen's faculty said in the days after Paddy's death: death doesn't care how busy you are or how much you might have left to give. We are here for a brief time but some, like Paddy, make a contribution that will endure.