

Clive Peedell

Dislikes “yes men” in medicine



CLIVE PEDELL is running hard. He ran 260 km (160 miles) from Nye Bevan's statue in Cardiff to the Department of Health in London to protest against the 2012 Health and Social Care Act and 66 km for the 66 years of the NHS in support of the recent “Jarrow march for the NHS.” He's also running for election as a candidate of the National Health Action Party, which he co-leads, challenging David Cameron in the solid Conservative seat of Witney, Oxfordshire. An oncologist at James Cook University Hospital in Middlesbrough, he is motivated by his objection to the incursions of the market and the private sector into the NHS.

What single unheralded change has made the most difference in your field in your lifetime?

“The advent of image guided radiotherapy. It has transformed the way we deliver radiotherapy, and its full potential is yet to be realised”

What was your earliest ambition?

To be a professional footballer. I had trials with Leyton Orient and Oxford United but wasn't good enough. I did play a few seasons for City though... Ripon City!

Who has been your biggest inspiration?

My family general practitioner, Leslie Blazewicz, who has now retired. An inspirational, kind, and caring GP, who seemed to have limitless knowledge and wisdom.

What was the worst mistake in your career?

Wishing away my last year as a medical student. I wanted to be a doctor so much that I forgot how fantastic it was to be a medical student. Time flies!

What was your best career move?

Going into clinical oncology—the most exciting field in medicine. A technological revolution in cancer therapy is in progress in both medical and radiation oncology.

Bevan or Lansley? Who has been the best and the worst health secretary in your lifetime?

Bevan was the best because of his vision and principles—he resigned on principle when prescription charges came in. Alan Milburn and Patricia Hewitt were the worst because they were so instrumental in pushing forward New Labour's marketisation and privatisation agenda, which totally undermined Bevan's founding principles and left the door wide open for Lansley.

Who is the person you would most like to thank and why?

My mum, for her unconditional love and support and for putting the education of her two boys above all else at great personal sacrifice.

To whom would you most like to apologise?

My wife and children. I spend too much time in medical politics and on social media. I blame Milburn, Hewitt, and Lansley.

If you were given £1m what would you spend it on?

Campaign funds for the National Health Action Party.

Where are or were you happiest?

On the first day of a holiday when my two children are almost uncontrollably excitable and my wife has a large glass of wine in her hand.

What single unheralded change has made the most difference in your field in your lifetime?

The advent of image guided radiotherapy. It has transformed the way we deliver radiotherapy, and its full potential is yet to be realised.

Do you support doctor assisted suicide?

I'm torn. I would say yes only in the context of a highly regulated system to protect the vulnerable.

What book should every doctor read?

NHS SOS by Jacky Davis and Raymond Tallis. The inside story on Lansley's NHS reorganisation is all there.

What is your guiltiest pleasure?

I have two—being a member of BMA Council and going on an annual European veterans' football tour.

If you could be invisible for a day what would you do?

Sit in on a cabinet meeting discussing the NHS.

What is your most treasured possession?

A letter of thanks from the Aneurin Bevan Society after I ran with my colleague, David Wilson, from Bevan's statue in Cardiff to the Department of Health in London in protest against the Health and Social Care Bill.¹

What, if anything, are you doing to reduce your carbon footprint?

Far too little on an individual level, but I strongly believe that we need to encourage sustainable energy policies.

What personal ambition do you still have?

To rid the English NHS of the internal market and return it to a publicly funded, publicly provided, and publicly accountable health service—owned by the people, for the people.

Summarise your personality in three words

Talkative, pragmatic, friendly.

Where does alcohol fit into your life?

I like a glass of wine with food and still enjoy a very occasional heavy night out.

What is your pet hate?

The “yes men” and “yes women” of the medical profession, who support government policies without reference to the majority views of the electorate and their own profession.

What would be on the menu for your last supper?

An Indian curry—poppadums and chutneys, mixed starter, chicken jalfrezi, pilau rice, naan bread, and lots of Indian lager.

Do you have any regrets about becoming a doctor?

None at all. I still look forward to work most days.

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