

## CURRICULUM VITAE

# Mary E Black

Public Health England's former head of digital strategy has had a more varied career than most—from starting in clinical medicine to working as a director of public health in east London. Conflict has been a constant theme—she grew up in Northern Ireland and married into a Bosnian family.



### The Troubles

I was raised a Catholic in Northern Ireland and studied at Trinity College Dublin (above). I chose a Protestant/Jewish teaching hospital because I have always wanted to work out what's happening on the other side of the fence. This was 1979 and the Troubles were in full swing.

### AIDS epidemic

I was a clinician in the early days of the AIDS epidemic. No one knew what it was and we called it the “slim disease” because people wasted away. It was a death sentence. Some nurses and doctors refused to treat people.



I remember feeling brave yet scared as I examined patients. I also remember their courage.

Later I ran the occupational needlestick injury database and had to tell a phlebotomist she'd contracted the virus—there was no follow-up or counselling.

### Woman with a pram

I got a Harkness fellowship and had the most amazing year at Harvard. I was bright, eager, and a bit of a star. Six years later my husband also got a fellowship and I went with him. I was totally ignored. It was a wake-up call to see what happens to a woman with a toddler in a pushchair.



### CAREER TIMELINE

- 1977-82 Trinity College Dublin
- 1982-89 House officer and registrar posts, London and Ireland
- 1989-93 North east Thames regional training scheme for public health
- 1992 WHO area office for former Yugoslavia
- 1993 Medical officer, medical evacuation programme, United Nations High Commission for Refugees, Sarajevo
- 1993-95 Regional technical officer, WHO regional office for Europe
- 1996-99 Professor of public health, University of Queensland, North Queensland Clinical School
- 1999-2005 Roles with Unicef in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia
- 2006-11 Consultant for charities and non-governmental organisations
- 2006-11 Consultant for governments and NGOs, founded two tech companies and completed doctorate
- 2012-13 Project director, NHS London Strategic Health Authority
- 2013-14 Director of public health, London borough of Havering
- 2014-15 NHS leadership programme, participant
- 2015-17 Head of digital strategy, Public Health England



### War

When the war in Yugoslavia broke out I heard that Donald Acheson (epidemiologist and former chief medical officer of England) was going out as a World Health Organization representative. I offered to help, saying I had connections through my husband and I could organise the public health trainees to look at any data he collected. Four days later I got a call asking me to go out there.

### Siege of Sarajevo



I set up the medical evacuation of patients from Sarajevo (left) during the siege. I got an armoured vehicle and put together a medical evacuation team. I travelled repeatedly across the front lines and had to negotiate safe passage. I was

nearly killed a couple of times. It was an adrenaline rush and I can see why some people get addicted to working in war zones. I still have complex feelings about it, as well as nightmares.

### Margins of society

I've always been drawn to work with groups such as the homeless and refugees—people on the margins of society. This was part of the drive for me to help set up a medical school in northern Queensland, Australia. The idea was to encourage more rural and indigenous graduates. It worked.



### Next move

I have just completed a stint as head of digital strategy at Public Health England. The future of public health and epidemiology is real time data and artificial intelligence.

I'm thinking about my next move. I would like to do more academic, consulting, and writing work. I love mentoring and take a great interest in the next generation.



Michael Lavelle-Jones, 64, has been president of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh since 2015. Until that appointment he was a consultant general surgeon at Ninewells Hospital, Dundee, with a special interest in colorectal and paediatric surgery. The author of several training books, he has won the Silver Scalpel award from the Association of Surgeons in Training and returned the compliment by standing up robustly for young surgeons, who he says are the most likely to be bullied. He favours a return to an apprenticeship system and the abolition of pejorative terms such as “junior” and “trainee.”

---

## BMJ CONFIDENTIAL

---

# Michael Lavelle-Jones

## Training driver

### What was your earliest ambition?

To be a train driver.

### What was your best career move?

To become a surgeon. No regrets 30 years on, and I'd do it all again in a heartbeat.

### What was the worst mistake in your career?

Not engaging in academic pursuit early on.

### How is your work-life balance?

Chaotic—all work and little play.

### How do you keep fit and healthy?

I think about exercise a lot and then lie down until the thoughts go away.

### What single change would you like to see made to the NHS?

Politicians who listen to and act on senior clinicians' recommendations and have realistic expectations of what can be achieved with limited resources.

### What do you wish that you had known when you were younger?

A better understanding of the NHS's structure and function.

### Do doctors get paid enough?

No.

### To whom would you most like to apologise?

My wife and late parents, for my continuing and repeated absence from family life.

### What do you usually wear to work?

Suit, collar, and tie.

### What living doctor do you most admire, and why?

Sir Alfred Cuschieri, for his determination, intellect, and enormous contribution to surgical practice worldwide.

### What is the worst job you have done?

Probably accident and emergency SHO, simply because of the very limited contact with each patient and the lack of follow-up.

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

The introduction of the laparoscope in surgical practice.

### What is your guiltiest pleasure?

Eating chocolate after a hard day in the operating theatre.

### Where are or when were you happiest?

At work: in the operating theatre. At home: cooking a meal with my wife.

### What personal ambition do you still have?

To become a better cook, learn a foreign language, and reactivate all of my interests outside the profession.

### Summarise your personality in three words

Empathic, enthusiastic, optimistic.

### What poem, song, or prose would you like at your funeral?

“Always Look on the Bright Side of Life.”

### Is the thought of retirement a dream or a nightmare?

Retirement is a dream to be cherished day by day when it finally arrives.

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2018;360:k458