

ROLE MODEL

Claire Lemer

The consultant paediatrician at Evelina London Children's Hospital tells **Adrian O'Dowd** how her experience as a patient has helped improve her as a doctor

"The real satisfaction comes from one-to-one connection with a patient or a family"

NOMINATED BY MIRIAM FINE-GOULDEN

"Claire has many outstanding qualities that make her an incredible role model. She is highly accomplished, yet all her achievements are driven by her desire to do a tremendous job for the people on behalf of whom she is working, rather than to further her own career or fulfil personal ambitions.

"She is hugely impressive, yet immensely humble. She is never self promoting and doesn't regard herself as exceptional."

Miriam Fine-Goulden is a clinical fellow at NHS England

NOMINATE A ROLE MODEL

To nominate someone who has been a role model during your medical career, send their name, their job title, and the reason for your nomination to arimmer@bmj.com



RICHARD H SMITH

Claire Lemer is definitely in the right job and oozes enthusiasm for her work. She qualified as a doctor in 2000, and her current role combines clinical work with service transformation.

This involves internal hospital improvements and heading service transformation for the Children and Young People's Health Partnership—an initiative to improve everyday healthcare services for children in the south London boroughs of Lambeth and Southwark.

But Lemer's work was put on hold in December last year when she was knocked down by a car while crossing a road, sustaining multiple broken bones.

"I've spent the past five months recovering from that," she says. "It's been an unexpected sabbatical. I spent two weeks in hospital, another eight weeks in a wheelchair because of my fractured pelvis, and then eight weeks doing physio. I am hopeful I will go back to work at the beginning of June."

Despite the experience, Lemer is positive. "I feel lucky to still be here, and the care I received from the NHS has been amazing," she says. "It's no bad thing for a clinician to experience what it's like to be a patient." She adds, "I've learnt all sorts of things about what matters to people. I will go back to work and be a better doctor for having lived with this."

On her return Lemer will start as clinical director for medicine at the Evelina, giving her the opportunity to do new things but still carry on transformation work.

During her career Lemer has worked abroad and was a Harkness fellow in health policy in Boston, Massachusetts, in 2004 and 2005. She has also coauthored two books on medical management. She spent two and a half years at the Department of Health for England and the World Health Organization, where she worked in public health, quality improvement, and clinical leadership programme development.

"The joy of working or studying abroad is that it gives you a chance to see different systems. It makes you think about the way we do things in the UK and whether we could do things differently or better," she says.

Lemer has played a part in influencing national policy and is associate national clinical director for children, young people, and transition to adulthood at NHS England. "I have been lucky to work in policy and be involved in changes that might have national reach, but often the real satisfaction comes from that one-to-one connection with a patient or a family," she explains.

Encouraging younger colleagues' development is something Lemer is passionate about, investing time to provide them with the knowledge, skills, opportunities, and connections to progress.

"It gives me immense joy to mentor people," she says. "Just now I have two pre-medical school sixth formers who I have been meeting with, and I have young clinicians who come and see me regularly."

Lemer also spends time outside work helping to improve her local, regional, and national communities, at organisations including the United Synagogue, a primary school board of governors, and several charities.

Lemer was awarded the British Empire Medal in 2014 for services to children's health—something she is typically humble about. "It was totally unexpected, overwhelming, and wonderful. You also get to meet and hear what the other awardees have done."

To young doctors or medical students, her advice is simple. "If there are things that you want to do, explore them. And never be afraid of asking questions. It's hugely important, as a developing clinician, to spend time thinking about what matters and excites you—and then pursue it with bravery."

Adrian O'Dowd, London

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2018;361:k1863



Liam Brennan, 58, is a consultant anaesthetist at Cambridge University Hospitals and president of the Royal College of Anaesthetists. He has worked in the NHS his whole adult life. After postgraduate anaesthetic training in London, including terms at Great Ormond Street and St Thomas' hospitals, he was appointed consultant anaesthetist in Cambridge in 1994 with a mixed paediatric and adult practice. His clinical interests include paediatric and neonatal anaesthesia, difficult airway management, and anaesthesia for plastic and reconstructive surgery. Elected to the Royal College of Anaesthetists council in 2010, he chaired the examinations, training, and revalidation committees before being elected president in 2015. He also leads on quality improvement and Brexit issues as vice chair of the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges.

BMJ CONFIDENTIAL

Liam Brennan Gasman and perioperative doc

What was your earliest ambition?

I always wanted to be a doctor: my mother worked as an intensive care unit sister in the 1960s, and I heard about dramatic life and death situations daily. Cardiac arrest, defibrillation, and tracheostomy were part of my vocabulary, even at age 6!

What was your best career move?

Being appointed to a training post at Great Ormond Street Hospital, where I developed my career long interest in specialised paediatric anaesthesia.

How is your work-life balance?

Pretty awful, but I've started to tackle this since my college recently published a salutary report on morale and welfare among trainee anaesthetists.

How do you keep fit and healthy?

Swimming. And walking everywhere I can to clock up at least 10 000 steps a day.

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

Greater investment in improving the morale and wellbeing of the workforce. We're being squeezed dry, and this isn't sustainable.

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

That none of us is indispensable and that we must look after our own wellbeing.

Do doctors get paid enough?

As a senior consultant it's difficult to complain, when colleagues working alongside us in other NHS roles need and deserve more.

What do you usually wear to work?

A suit—but increasingly without a tie, to comply with infection control policies.

What is the worst job you have done?

Assembling vacuum cleaners as a first year medical student during a summer vacation. It taught me how lucky I was to have an interesting career ahead of me.

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

Archie Brain's invention of the laryngeal mask airway: it's revolutionised airway management inside and outside the operating theatre.

What new technology or development are you most looking forward to?

Improved patient specific care through advances in genomic medicine. In the not too distant future we should be able to tailor anaesthetic techniques and the agents we use to optimise recovery after surgery and improve long term outcomes.

What book should every doctor read?

The Citadel by A J Cronin. Ground breaking when it was published in the late 1930s, it's been credited with laying the foundation for the NHS.

Where are or when were you happiest?

Watching my twin sons play rugby for their school and club.

What personal ambition do you still have?

Doing more to advocate for people with learning disabilities. My oldest son has severe learning disabilities, and it concerns me that some of the most vulnerable members of our society still don't receive equitable access to healthcare.

What is your pet hate?

Cyclists riding at night without any lights. I've seen too many killed or injured.

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2018;361:k2144