



EDITORIAL

The IJS welcomes two great pioneers

The Executive Committee of the *International Journal of Surgery* recently welcomed two new members, Professor Thomas E. Starzl and Professor Robert Winston, both of whom are leaders in their respective fields. Professor Starzl's agreement to join the Executive Committee coincided almost exactly with his award by the President of the United States of the highest honor that nation can bestow on an individual in the field of science, the National Medal of Science. This award recognized his many contributions to surgery, particularly in the field of organ transplantation.



Professor Thomas E. Starzl
(image: University of Pittsburgh Medical Center)

Working in Denver, Colorado, Professor Starzl was one of the very early pioneers of kidney transplantation, reporting the best results in the world to that date in the early 1960s with the use of a combination of azathioprine and corticosteroids

as immunosuppressive therapy. He subsequently was the first to introduce triple drug therapy in a series of patients by adding antithymocyte globulin to this regimen.

He is perhaps best known, however, for pioneering liver transplantation, in which field he is rightfully considered the 'father'. He carried out the first clinical liver transplant in 1963 and achieved the world's first long-term survivors in the late 1960s. Following the introduction of cyclosporine by Sir Roy Calne's group in the late 1970s, Professor Starzl combined this drug with corticosteroid therapy, allowing liver transplantation to be performed with much greater success. Following Dr. Starzl's move to the University of Pittsburgh at the end of 1980, his own comprehensive investigation of yet another immunosuppressive drug, FK506 (tacrolimus), resulted in its introduction clinically, enabling highly successful transplantation of the liver and other extra-renal organs. This advance allowed him and others to pioneer intestinal and multivisceral transplants. In the 1980s, Professor Starzl and his colleagues built the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center into the world's premier transplant center.

Perhaps surprisingly, Professor Starzl modestly refers to his contributions to liver transplantation as being less significant than those he has made in recent years. These relate to the importance of persisting chimerism in inducing a state of immunological hyporesponsiveness or tolerance in transplant patients to their donor organ. Based on this concept, he and his colleagues have steadily weaned patients from immunosuppressive therapy, and now have many who receive a single immunosuppressive agent only once every 2–3 days, and some who have been weaned entirely. We welcome Professor Starzl to the Executive Committee, and congratulate him on the honor bestowed on him recently by the President of the United States.

The contributions of Lord Winston's group to clinical medicine include the development of gynaecological microsurgery in the 1970s and the development of techniques to help families who have genetic problems associated with gender (such as haemophilia and muscular dystrophy), single gene defects (such as cystic fibrosis) and chromosomal abnormalities. His team is now developing methods for maturing eggs outside the body, a technique that will make IVF very much cheaper, more accessible and far less intrusive for would-be parents. His Queen Charlotte's Appeal raised over £13 million to build and equip the most advanced reproductive research centre in Europe, with space for 130 scientists and doctors working to improve the health of women and babies.



Lord Winston
(image: British Association for the Advancement of Science)

Lord Winston has not only been a pioneer through his research but also through his ability to communicate science to a mass audience. He has been a leading voice on fertility issues and a regular presenter on BBC science programmes. His series include "Your Life in Their Hands" (five series), "Making Babies", "The Human Body" (three BAFTAs and a Peabody award), "Secret Life of Twins", "The Superhuman" (October 2000 – Wellcome Award for Medicine and Biology), "Human Instinct" (Emmy nomination and BMA Gold Medal Award) and "The Human Mind". His programme on DNA, "The Threads of Life" won the international Science Prize in Paris last year and he recently won the VLV Award for the most outstanding personal contribution to British television in 2003.

Lord Winston is currently presenting "Child of Our Time" (in its sixth series) a huge and unique

BBC project commissioned to answer the age-old question – are we born or made? This groundbreaking TV series sets out to observe the development of 20 individuals who were born around the millennium until 2020. They represent the widest possible range of genetic, social, geographical and ethnic backgrounds and the aim is to build up a coherent and scientifically accurate picture of how the genes and the environments of our growing children interact to make a fully-formed person.

His contributions have also been recognized by a Gold Medal from the Royal Society of Health in 1998 and the BMA Gold Award for Medicine in the Media in 1999. His other awards include the Victor Bonney Medal for contributions to surgery from the Royal College of Surgeons of England and the Faraday Gold Medal from The Royal Society. He was also elected a Fellow of the Academy of Medical Sciences (FMedSci) in 1998 and is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts (FRSA).

Lord Winston is currently Professor of Fertility Studies at Imperial College London and Director of NHS Research and Development for The Hammersmith Hospitals Trust, one of UK's leading medical research centres. As a peer (Lord Winston of Hammersmith) since 1995, he takes the Government Whip and speaks regularly in the House of Lords on education, science, medicine and the arts. He was the recent Chairman of the House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology and is a board member of the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology. We welcome Lord Winston to the Executive Committee and look forward to working with him and Professor Starzl on building a leading international surgical journal.

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