

Dr Ann receives “Lifetime Achievement Award” from UK's top medical journalists

Dr Ann McPherson, a GP, Oxford academic and innovative health educator, last night received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the UK's top medical journalists.

The Medical Journalists' Association presented the accolade following her 30 years spent improving both public and professional understanding of health and illness. Her stream of successful enterprises stems from an uncanny ability to think outside the box - and turn extraordinary ideas into vibrant, sustainable projects.

The jewels in the crown have been www.healthtalkonline.org and www.youthhealthtalk.org for adults and children. They feature 10,000 video clips from more than 2000 people, sharing experiences about everything from their first sexual encounter to living with a terminal illness.

These interviews, conducted by Oxford University researchers, provide scientific information and support for others with similar conditions, and provide an insight into their experiences for carers and healthcare professionals. They have been widely praised for uniquely combining objective knowledge with subjective experience.

Dr McPherson set up the academic research arm and co-founded the websites, and the DIPEX charity which manages them, a decade ago - after contracting cancer in the mid 1990s. A GP for 31 years, she is also a successful writer, journalist and broadcaster and has attracted the praise and support of celebrities including patron Hugh Grant, Jon Snow and Jenni Murray, plus leading doctors and specialists.

One of her books, *Diary of a Teenage Health Freak* (co-authored with Dr Aidan McFarlane), sold over a million copies and has been made into two award-winning television series. It led to her setting up an interactive website, www.teenagehealthfreak.org, providing practical health advice to teenagers.

Dr McPherson has also been active and highly influential in the campaign to legalise assisted dying, freely acknowledging that facing terminal pancreatic cancer, she wishes 'to live as long as possible but not at the expense of enduring an undignified death'.

Receiving her award, Dr McPherson said: “I am hugely honoured; it's particularly flattering when it comes from my peers in medical journalism. I accept this on behalf of my whole team at DIPEX and others who have worked with me over the years. I am just the catalyst – nothing would have been possible without true teamwork.

The DIPEX Charity

DIPEX is a registered charity No: 1087019 and company limited by guarantee No. 4178865
Registered office: 41 Cornmarket Street, Oxford OX1 3HA
Co-Founders: Dr Ann McPherson CBE and Dr Andrew Herxheimer
Trustees: Lord Stone of Blackheath (Chair), Lord Turnberg, Catherine Dilnot,
Pauline Droop, Dr Andrew Herxheimer, Fred Hucker, Dr Judy Kane

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She added: "My message to medical journalists is to follow the example of colleagues who use the sites when writing articles - and above all, I would ask them to pass on the links to readers.

ENDS

Note to editors:

About DIPEX/Healthtalkonline/Youthhealthtalk

DIPEX has created two websites – www.healthtalkonline.org and www.youthhealthtalk.org – of people's experiences of more than 50 different illnesses and health conditions. The websites are aimed at patients, their carers, family and friends, doctors, nurses and other health professionals, and are based on in-depth qualitative research carried out by the Health Experiences Research Group at the University of Oxford.

Users of the websites will find accounts – presented through video, audio and written material – of issues such as reaction to diagnosis, consultation with their doctor, effect on work, social life and relationships, decisions on treatment options and side-effects.

To date, www.healthtalkonline.org has covered illnesses including cancer, heart disease, neurological conditions (Parkinson's, epilepsy and autism) chronic health issues (HIV, diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis) and mental health. It also provide experiences of women's health, dying and bereavement as well as young people's experiences of epilepsy, sexual health and cancer on the dedicated youth website – www.youthhealthtalk.org.

Supporters include Jon Snow, Dawn French, John Humphrys, Ian McEwan, Dr Jonathan Miller, Jenni Murray, Michael Palin, Philip Pullman, Libby Purves, Claire Rayner, Thom Yorke, Terry Pratchett and many others. The actor, Hugh Grant has just agreed to be its patron.

DIPEX is a registered charity no. 1087019. It is funded by a range of organisations including the Department of Health, charitable trusts and research groups.

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