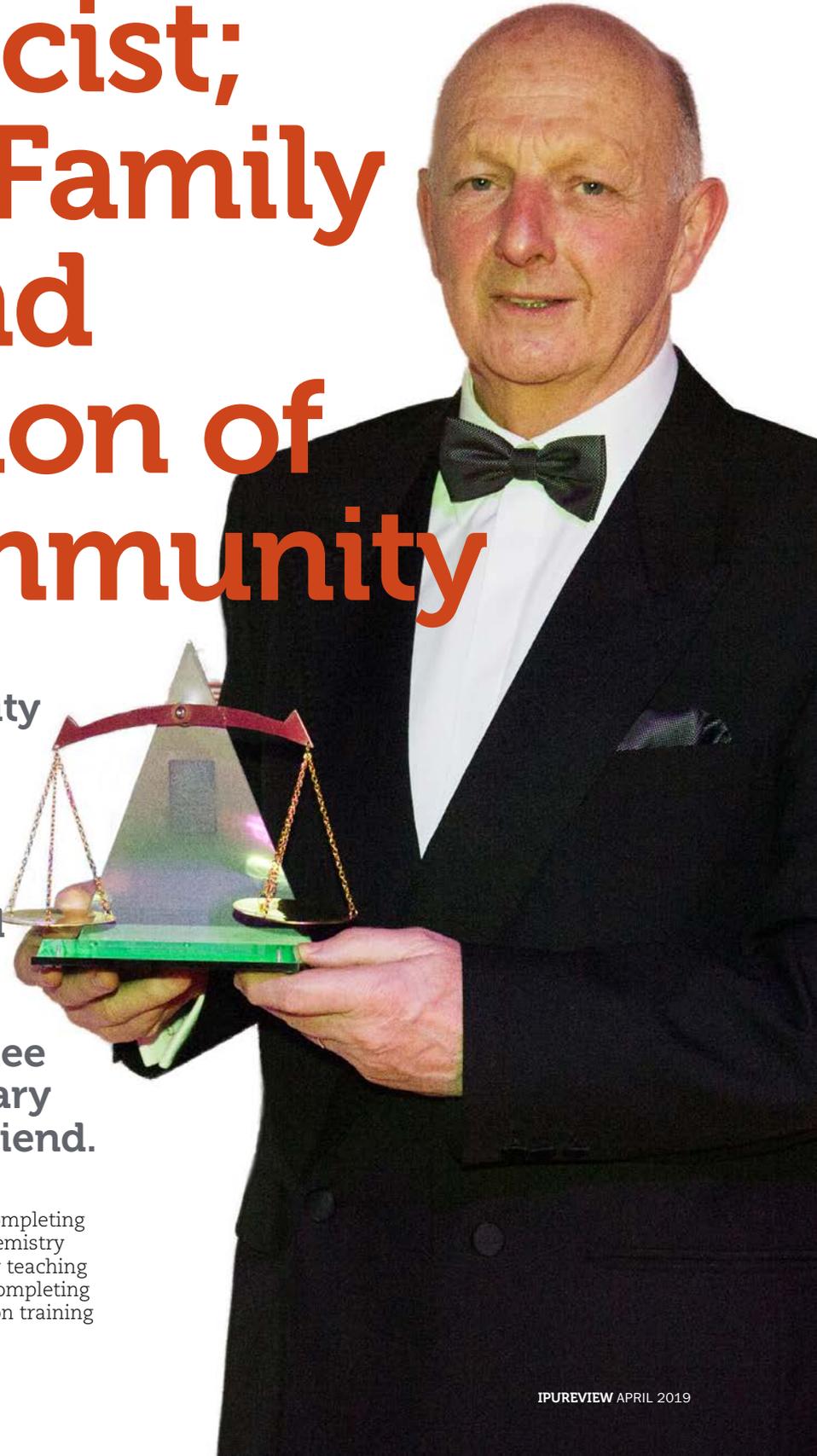




Diarmuid O'Donovan: Pharmacist; Friend; Family Man; and Champion of the Community

The pharmacy community was shocked and deeply saddened to learn of Diarmuid O'Donovan's untimely death on 28 December last. Diarmuid was a giant of Irish pharmacy: a former President and later Trustee of the Union, an exemplary pharmacist and a dear friend.



Diarmuid was originally from Skibbereen, Co Cork. He was a late-comer to

pharmacy, first completing a degree in Biochemistry and subsequently teaching for a year. After completing his pre-registration training

in St James's Hospital, he registered as a pharmacist in 1977. Following a period in community pharmacy in Dublin, he returned to Cork in 1981 to take over his pharmacy in Ballyphehane. Diarmuid forged strong links with his patients, always making sure their needs were catered for. Always a visionary, Diarmuid then sought to improve the conditions of Irish pharmacy and he was elected to the Executive Committee of the Irish Pharmacy Union.

My memories of Diarmuid began with IPU meetings in Dundrum and later in Butterfield House. Diarmuid travelled up to the meetings with what was referred to then as the "Cork contingent": Jimmy Pettit, Tom O'Connor, Frank Reen, Jack Shanahan, Pat Quigley and Aidan O'Shea. A healthy debate on the train on the way up was always had and they were always eager contributors to every meeting attended.

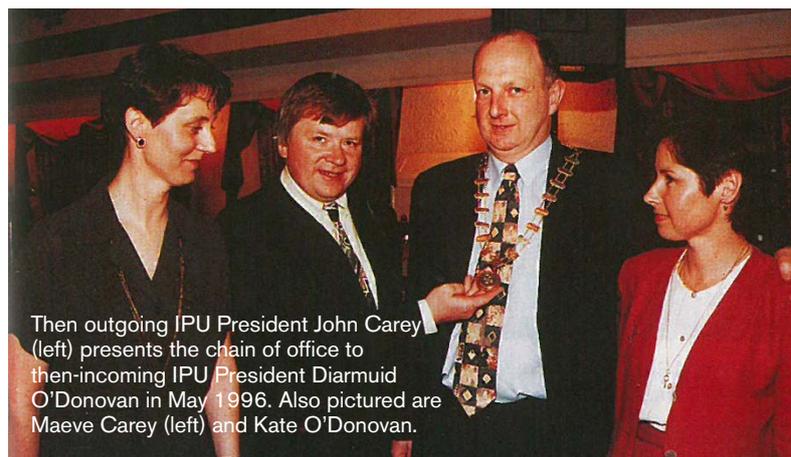
During these years, both Diarmuid and I participated on the various IPU committees and worked our way into more senior roles. As time went on, Diarmuid was always encouraging me to accept new posts of responsibility. On the National Executive of the IPU, as it was then called, I saw at first hand the personality, intelligence and

professionalism of Diarmuid.

Over the years, we both became more involved in the IPU. Diarmuid was my Vice President from 1994 to 1996 and in 1996 he was elected President. This was marked by the new GMS contract coming into place and Diarmuid was keen to ensure that it catered for the needs of all stakeholders. He went to great lengths to secure the future for newly qualified pharmacists, also securing State-funded CPD (Continuing Professional Development) for pharmacists.

While Diarmuid made positive contributions on a national front, he also made many positive and constructive contributions internationally, particularly at PGEU (Pharmaceutical Group of the European Union) and FIP (International Pharmaceutical Federation). I accompanied Diarmuid to some of these conferences in Europe, witnessing how well known and respected he was. Diarmuid always enquired into how his colleagues in other countries felt and worked with their Governments and how they worked to deliver pharmaceutical care to patients. Diarmuid was also interested in the politics and history of the countries he visited. He steadfastly gleaned information from taxi drivers, waiters and every local person he could strike up a conversation with.

At this time in Cork, young pharmacists were completing their intern year and Diarmuid's tutor positions were very sought after. He didn't limit education to his pharmacy; he was part of a group of pharmacists who lectured student pharmacists in the School of Pharmacy at



Then outgoing IPU President John Carey (left) presents the chain of office to then-incoming IPU President Diarmuid O'Donovan in May 1996. Also pictured are Maeve Carey (left) and Kate O'Donovan.

UCC and also student doctors, as he held the view that it was important to connect with the pharmacists of the future and all other stakeholders in the health profession.

Over the many years, both my wife, Maeve, and I got to know Diarmuid and his wife, Katie. We would meet up on many occasions, some of which included memorable trips abroad, including a trip to Paris and Copenhagen. We have great memories of these events and also the many IPU AGMs and President's dinners we attended together.

We maintained this friendship over the years and met them both just before Christmas. More recently, Diarmuid was made a Trustee of the IPU, serving alongside Tony Walsh and myself. We worked well together. We would regularly meet with the officers of the IPU, ensuring that the goals and objectives of the IPU were being achieved for the members and the profession. Indeed, the last meeting we had was very productive. There was an enjoyable lunch where many important topics were discussed. Afterwards, as we

all went our separate ways, little did we realise it would be the last meeting Diarmuid was to attend.

Diarmuid stood out from the crowd. Everyone loved him for his wit, generosity and his capacity to listen, understand and comfort people when needed. He received many achievements in the Pharmacy Profession, in particular, *The Liz Herbert Memorial Lifetime Achievement Award 2017*.

The countless deeds Diarmuid did for patients and friends are unknown to us all. But his final deed of donating four of his organs and giving new life to four recipients (who thankfully are doing well) is the most generous.

Family meant everything to Diarmuid: his beloved wife Katie, daughter Trudy, son Derry, daughter-in-law Ann Marie, and being grandad (pops) to Ollie and Lyla was a major part in his life.

I feel privileged to have been a colleague and friend to Diarmuid for over 30 years.

People often say Ní beidh a leithéid ann arís; however, as consolation, we can draw inspiration from Diarmuid's life.

Memories of Diarmuid

While it was difficult to lose Diarmuid so suddenly, the response of the Ballyphehane community has been heartening. Numerous customers related how Diarmuid touched their lives in caring and compassionate ways that few knew about.

When visiting the pharmacy to express their condolences, customers related how Diarmuid visited their family to mark a birthday, anniversary or a bereavement. After closing the pharmacy, he often dropped in on people coping with illness, brought flowers to families at Christmas in remembrance of deceased relatives or brought cards and gifts to those celebrating a big birthday. Almost everyone had a story to tell about how Diarmuid helped and supported them with his kindness and generosity of spirit that was remarkable and unique.

Sheila O'Driscoll MPSI

Eulogy by Trudy O'Donovan



I would like to say a few words about Dad as a personality. “Diarmuid O’Donovan was born in the barracks in Ballyvourney in 1950. Having moved to Skibbereen where his mother ran a pub on the main street, his education in St Fachtna’s, De La Salle, continued into UCC in 1968 where he studied Biochemistry. Later, he went back to college in UCD to study Pharmacy and registered as a pharmacist in 1977.

“Dad met my mum, Katie Murray, at the wedding of Cassie Kennelly and Jimmy Riordan in 1971 and they began courting shortly afterwards. From the get go, they were like two peas in a pod and they were absolutely mad about each other. They married in 1976. Dad adored mum and although their personalities were quite different, they made a fantastic team. In a recent birthday card, he wrote ‘you are the best thing that happened to me, welcome to the golden years and let’s make them special’. Derry and I were so lucky to have grown up in such a loving environment.

“Dad was extremely kind and generous, he would help out anybody in need at the drop of a hat and loved doing so. He had a genuine interest in other people, their lives and their experiences. It was a common occurrence for Dad to start a conversation with waiters/waitresses and strangers in other social occasions. Dad would want to know where they came from and to find out about them, such was his interest in people.

“Dad’s generosity continued even in death. He became only the 81st organ donor in the country in 2018, donating his liver, two kidneys and a lung. There was a palpable excitement when the organ donor team found out that dad’s blood type was the rare blood group, B positive. Four people who were in the need of a B positive donor would now have the hope of a better life. Wouldn’t Dad be chuffed that a plane flew from the UK and flew his liver back to one lucky person who was already receiving Dad’s liver before we left CUH on Saturday morning. If he was speaking today, he would encourage organ donation. We received

notification on Saturday evening that all four recipients were doing very well.

“Dad had what could be described as an infectious and quirky sense of humour.

“When we were young, Dad used to drive us to school and we used to shout out the window ‘you’re on candid camera’, or he would keep driving around roundabouts 4/5 times at a time just for the craic, or he would shout ‘duck’ going under bridges. We thought it was hilarious but he would always be laughing heartier than the rest of us. Also, he would take great joy in hiding your dinner if you left the kitchen, just to amuse himself!

“He absolutely loved spending time with family, and particularly his grandchildren Ollie and Lyla. He relished showing off Ollie at Douglas market on Saturday mornings. Nana and Pops would get tea and cakes and they’d get a chocolate marshmallow and baby-cino for Ollie! The O’Donovan love for sweets was most definitely passed on to Ollie! He used to bring us swimming in Rocky Bay when we were younger on a dull Irish summer’s day and

he would make it seem like California! He was able to relate to people of all ages and he had a special bond with children and with each and every one of his nieces and nephews, a very loving relationship with his sister Ena, brothers Seamus and Cathal, his daughter-in-law Anne-Marie and all his in-laws. At his niece Kate’s wedding recently, Dad was the last one standing and could be heard singing ‘Sean South’ at 5am!

“Dad was the rock of our family. Dad and mum gave Derry and I every opportunity in life. He was always there for us, no matter what. Dad was an unbelievably patient man. There was many an occasion over the years when I sought his help whether it was for school or college work or simply calling him for advice on how to deal with any situations that arose for me. He always knew what to do and I’m really going to miss his common sense and wisdom. I’ll be forever grateful for his unconditional love and extraordinary generosity. The best tribute that I can pay to him would be to keep alive that sense of fun and humour that we both shared.”

Diarmuid at his retirement party in November 2018, with his wife Katie, daughter Trudy and son Derry.

Eulogy by Derry O'Donovan



I want to say a few words about Dad's social interests and his pharmacy involvement.

"Dad had a great interest in history and local history, he could talk about it for hours. His most recent tour with Cathal and Martin Healy took them on a re-route of the events of the Kilmichael ambush. They had planned to do a similar trip in the spring around Béal na Bláth.

"He loved music from all sorts of genres and musicians and used to attend the Brass Band Championships in Clonakilty annually with Seamus and Damien Courtney.

"He loved walking the woods in Garryduff nearby. He completed the Camino de Santiago in 2014 over three separate trips and had planned to go back this year to experience a different route in France. He used to climb mountains regularly, most recently with Frank and Maree Reen and Ena.

"He played Gaelic football and soccer in his youth and used to love attending Cork football and hurling matches. He was proud of O'Donovan Rossa's All Ireland Club Senior Football Championship win in 1992. Killarney on Munster final day was always great craic, although we rarely got the result we wanted!

"Whether it was rugby or soccer, he travelled all over with Seamus and Cathal, and myself. On one occasion, he travelled to Stuttgart to

watch Ireland play Germany with Cathal, Noelle Feeney and a large Ballyphehane contingent. We spotted the whole group on TV, dressed up in Viking costumes, and Dad in the middle of the group giving it socks! It is a mark of his optimistic outlook on life that he looked forward to better times ahead for Irish soccer under the new manager Mick McCarthy!

"Dad absolutely loved working as a pharmacist. He began working in the pharmacy in Ballyphehane in 1981. He quickly built up a successful business and had another successful business in Bishopstown for a few years. He was a Pre Registration tutor for over 30 years, training over 30 pharmacists. Dad stood up for what he believed in, he always aimed for the highest professional standards in his pharmacy and fostered an environment of life-long learning for all his staff. He brought his sense of humour to work, he always created a positive environment to work in, and it is a testament to him that most of the staff have enjoyed working in the pharmacy for a long time. He was much more than just a pharmacist to the community in Ballyphehane, he was their friend, and will be sorely missed. In recent years, when he was working part-time, not a day went by when I wasn't asked around the square or in the pharmacy at least once "how's your Dad,

Derry? Tell him I was asking for him". 'Flying it altogether' was usually my answer and we would have a chat about him. I'm really going to miss being asked this.

"Outside of the pharmacy, Dad was heavily involved in the Irish Pharmacy Union, where he served as Vice-President, President, and Trustee. He was also a long-standing supporter of both the Pharmacy Benevolent Fund and the Uniphar wholesale group for independent pharmacies.

"In 2017, having previously received numerous other awards for his achievements in pharmacy, Dad was hugely honoured to receive the Liz Herbert Memorial Lifetime Achievement Award, which is presented to a pharmacist whose efforts on behalf of the profession in Ireland over their lifetime are adjudged to have been the most remarkable.

"Dad, for the future, had a list of plans for his retirement – the Camino again, Lanzarote with his grandchildren and he was trying his best to encourage Mum to surprise her sister Mary at her big birthday celebrations in Brisbane. He had recently started going to an Irish speaking social group where he would be excited about shooting the breeze 'as Gaeilge' for a couple of hours.

"Recently, we had an evening in Kinsale to celebrate Dad's retirement. He spoke about each staff member

individually and what they meant to him. Later on, the night spilled over into Noel Murphy's Pub, Ballyphehane, until the early hours of the morning, where we had a night to remember.

"Mum, Trudy and I, have received so many messages of support from people conveying their fond memories of Dad, and these messages mean so much to all of us. We spent time with family on Sunday evening reminiscing about the good times, and he provided us with many, many laughs. To all of our relatives and friends who have come from as far as Australia to spend time with us, thank you so much. Dad would be humbled to see such a big crowd here today.

"We'll miss you more than words can express, Dad. You were the first person I'd turn to if I wanted advice about absolutely anything and your generosity knew no bounds. During difficult times, you would always find a way to cheer me up and make things better. Our house was such a fun, happy house to grow up in and you were always a great friend to me. It fills me with sadness that I never had the opportunity to say goodbye and to tell you how much you meant to me. You were a true gentleman, you were such a special Dad and we'll always love you.

"Codladh Sámh."

Liz Herbert Memorial Lifetime Achievement Award

Diarmuid O'Donovan, Ballyphehane, Co Cork, was awarded the Liz Herbert Memorial Lifetime Achievement Award at the 2017 Clanwilliam Pharmacist Awards. This honour is awarded to a pharmacist whose efforts on behalf of the profession in Ireland over their lifetime are adjudged to have been the most remarkable. This article was first published in the February 2018 edition of the *IPU Review*.

After being presented with his award, Diarmuid expressed his delight to be acknowledged in this way, in the presence of friends, family and pharmacist colleagues.

In his acceptance speech, Diarmuid reflected on his many years as a community pharmacist, the changes that have happened in the profession in that time, and the current position and future of community pharmacy.



Colleagues and friends,
I knew Liz Herbert, as she was in the class ahead of me in the School of Pharmacy in Shrewsbury Road. She was an exceptional person in every sense of the word, who loved life and loved pharmacy. She was an enthusiastic supporter of the Pharmacy Benevolent Fund and of the Pharmacist Awards. So I am very honoured and grateful to receive this award dedicated to the memory of Liz Herbert.

I have been told that, as a recipient of this award, I am given the freedom to say a few words, if I so desire. President Donald Trump was upset last weekend at being called old by Kim Jong-un and said that he would never call Kim Jong-un small and fat! Being of a similar vintage as the leader of the free world, I'm not that sensitive about my age. I am reminded of the quotation "when a man gets well into his seventies, his continued existence is a mere miracle". I am not quite at that age just yet but this is a soap box opportunity that might not come my way again.

It is a privilege to be able to say that my 40 years as a practising pharmacist have been satisfying and fulfilling in so many ways. Through my involvement in the cut and thrust of pharmaceutical politics and organisations, I've known some great and inspirational colleagues, too

many to mention, and I have made lifelong friends. Most of all, I have loved my job, my profession as a community pharmacist.

I began my pharmacist career in 1977. In my opinion, the launch of the General Medical Services Scheme seven years earlier was the single most important event in the history of pharmacy in the 20th century. It signalled the end, virtually, of the traditional compounding function of pharmacists. Prior to 1970, those who couldn't afford to pay for prescription medicines were sometimes forced to queue at health board run dispensary clinics, usually attached to local hospitals, where prescriptions would often be dispensed through a hatch.

With the advent of the new GMS scheme, these services were now contracted out, through the network of community pharmacies nationwide, and this initiative heralded a secure economic footing for the community pharmacy sector into the future.

An early memory for me back then in 1978 was the arrival of an RTÉ camera crew at a meeting of the IPU National Executive at its headquarters in Merrion Square. I was representing the employee pharmacists on the National Executive. The main item on the agenda that

day was to debate what the then Minister for Health, Mr Charles J Haughey, referred to as "an Irish solution to an Irish problem". This was a proposal on the statute books, to make it legally permissible to purchase condoms, only through pharmacies but also only if you had a prescription for them, written by a medical doctor. It's probably difficult for younger people here to appreciate how deeply conservative society in Ireland was back then, and pharmacists were no different. The debate was intense around the table at the National Executive [meeting] that day but we did vote in favour of the proposal, and it headlined the *Nine O'Clock News* that evening.

The next seminal event was the agreement on the new pharmacy contract, in 1996, which had taken a number of years of tough protracted negotiations to come to fruition. The negotiators from the IPU and the Department of Health were, I believe, visionary in agreeing a number of novel and ground-breaking measures to expand the professional role of the pharmacist, for example, the payment of a treatment fee, as opposed to the usual dispensing fee in the High Tech scheme, a fee for not dispensing and a fee for phased dispensing; both fees allowing for the

pharmacist's own discretion and judgement. There was also funding provided for continuing education and so on. I was fortunate to have been elected President of the IPU, three weeks before the 1996 contract was signed into law. During the next two years of the implementation phase, it was a very exciting and positive time to be involved.

The next high point was the passing of the Pharmacy Act 2007, which was the culmination of many years of lobbying for legislative change mainly from within the profession itself.

I believe that any self-respecting progressive profession should welcome a transparent and openly accountable form of regulation and should have nothing to fear from a lay majority on the council of its regulatory body. For practising pharmacists, the gradual movement of the inspection system, broadly away from un-notifiable inspections to self-assessment and risk-based inspection systems, is a welcome and sensible approach and a tribute to those who have worked and campaigned strongly on the council and outside to achieve this outcome. Regarding disciplinary procedures around practice of pharmacy issues, mediation offers speedier, less costly, less stressful and more efficient

"I believe that any self-respecting progressive profession should welcome a transparent and openly accountable form of regulation and should have nothing to fear from a lay majority on the council of its regulatory body."



Liz Herbert Memorial Lifetime Achievement Award (L – R): Bobby Kerr (MC), Noel Stenson (President, Pharmacy Benevolent Fund), Diarmuid O'Donovan, Padraic Ferguson (JPA Brenson Lawlor) and Eileen Byrne (Managing Director, Clanwilliam Health).

outcomes, and are infinitely more preferable than the adversarial over-legalistic, excessively expensive and cumbersome approach currently favoured.

The insistence in the 2007 Act that all pharmacies should have consultation areas is, I believe, a progressive move. Regarding continuing professional development, in my experience, pharmacists have never been found wanting in their eagerness, in a voluntary capacity, to keep up to date in pharmacology and clinical knowledge, even if this meant travelling out to CPD lectures in large numbers after a day's work in wintertime. For example, during this autumn's excellent IPU Academy programme, there were 2,300 attendances at 21 venues at 63 courses, delivered by 21 tutors from within the pharmacy profession itself.

There is inevitably an element of a 'fear of the unknown' at the introduction of a new regime of CPD by the Irish Institute of Pharmacy to include, for example, ePortfolios, practice reviews and so on. The objective is to upskill practising pharmacists, to show that they are maintaining their competence to practise and engaging in

CPD that's relevant to them and will make an impact on services that they operate, such as vaccination services and on services that they will be performing in the future. It is a novel and totally different concept for the profession that is outcomes based. Given time and encouragement, I believe the profession will come to accept the worth of what the IIOF is trying to achieve.

In 2008, the introduction of emergency legislation, FEMPI, to implement drastic cuts in the remuneration of pharmacists has left its toll on the pharmaceutical sector across the board. The Government has made savings of €2.6 billion through reduced payments to pharmacists over an eight-year period from 2009 to 2016. We have had to be adaptable and resilient. The sector can take no more cuts. It is imperative that a new contract be negotiated for community pharmacists to further expand our professional role and to put the pharmacy sector back on a firmer economic footing once more.

The new schools of pharmacy in UCC and RCSI along with Trinity, and the UK universities, have maintained a steady output of highly talented,

ambitious and competent pharmacist graduates that are a huge asset to the pharmacy profession and they will rise to the challenges for the pharmacy profession across the various disciplines of the pharmacy sector.

The threat to independent ownership of pharmacies, by the continuing expansion of large pharmacy chains, foreign and home grown, is a worry. The international chains appear to have an aggressive strategy for growth in order to consolidate their presence in the Irish retail pharmacy sector. It is a concern because it limits the opportunities of young pharmacists to own their own pharmacies.

There is a story about Roy Keane in happier days than this week for Irish soccer followers. He was playing for Man United in the Champions League Semi-Final in April 1999 against Juventus. He was carrying a yellow card from a previous round and early in the game against Juventus, he was given another yellow card which ruled him out of the final, if his team were to win the semi-final. He went on to play a stormer, scored a goal and almost won the match on his own. Man United won 3-2 and Roy Keane was awarded Man of the Match. He

was asked afterwards how he managed to motivate himself knowing that he wouldn't be playing in the final. He said, "It's my job, isn't it? You wouldn't praise a postman for delivering letters. It's what I'm paid to do, it's my job".

So I'm delighted to get the Liz Herbert Memorial Lifetime Achievement Award, for just doing my job.

Thanks to JPA Brenson Lawlor, the sponsors of this award, to Padraic Ferguson for his hospitality and indeed to all the sponsors of this evening's event.

The Pharmacy Benevolent Fund is a very worthwhile charity, wholly transparent, with just one part-time employee and many dedicated unpaid volunteers who deserve our gratitude for the brilliant work that they do. Please support the Pharmacy Benevolent Fund.

Thanks to Bobby Kerr; you've done a great job too tonight.

Lastly, thanks to the members of the organising committee, whose dedication and many hours of planning and hard work have ensured the success of this great occasion.

Mile buíochas.