

#SundayWiMIN23 Week 2: Dr Deirdre Kinlen

Dr Deirdre Kinlen (née Keane) from Carrick-on-Shannon, studied Biochemistry in UCD then in Oxford obtained a DPhil with Professor Sir Hans Krebs (of Cycle fame). On return to Dublin she worked in Trinity and UCD Departments of Biochemistry and Medicine. She always preferred teaching to laboratory work. She married Kevin Kinlen and had 4 children. When their youngest child started school Deirdre, by now 40 years old, went back to fulfil her dream, and studied Medicine in RCSI with the very welcoming 'Class of 1988'.

Three years in Dublin hospitals were followed by General Practice training and Membership of the Irish College of General Practitioners (MICGP). Deirdre worked with Dr Henry Jack in General Practice in Sandycove and took over his practice when he retired a year later. Highlights of General Practice for Deirdre were being allowed to share patients' medical problems as well as their life stories, their sorrows and joys. Drs Neil Webb and Monica McWeeney had their own practices within the Surgery, and in the local hospitals many consultants were very supportive.

Deirdre was involved in the ICGP, as a Faculty Rep for Dun Laoghaire on Council and as an MICGP Examiner for a number of years. She was an active member of the Health in Practice Programme of the ICGP encouraging GPs to look after their own health. She was also on the Committee which set up the Shared Care in Diabetes Programme in Dublin/East Leinster .

Deirdre taught medical students at the Dept of Public Health and Primary Care, TCD with Professor Tom O'Dowd, first as tutor, then as lecturer. Of great interest here was the Humanities and Medicine module.

After 20 years in practice a retirement letter for the HSE came as rather a shock. Deirdre overcame this by giving a party to thank those who had helped her reach and enjoy her medical career, including those who had collected the children from school in the early years and various friends and colleagues along the way.

A few months later Deirdre started Spirituality studies at Milltown Institute of Theology and Philosophy. This led to a Higher Diploma and a Master's in Christian Spirituality. Her Master's Dissertation was on 'Spirituality and the Patient-Doctor Relationship'. The outcome of her research was that the doctor needs to look after their own well-being (physical, intellectual, psychological, emotional and spiritual) in order to help the patient to elicit their own innate healing power.

As a result, Deirdre has continued to give workshops on her own and with three colleagues (Drs Andrée Rochfort, Monica McWeeney and David Thomas) at large and smaller ICGP Meetings on coping with stress and burnout, and on resilience in medical practice. She and a number of colleagues have long seen the need and have pressured for the setting up of a Mentorship Programme by the ICGP, run by trained GP volunteers. She is delighted that it is up and running and can be accessed through the College.

Deirdre is part of a very active Retired GP Discussion Group affiliated to the ICGP. They meet monthly with a speaker, and annually with GP Trainees and their Trainers. In addition, a smaller group (Writers' Syndrome) meet monthly as they try their hand at Creative Writing.

Family including grandchildren, parish work (greatly diminished due to Covid), birdwatching, gardening, walking and reading fill in the spare time. Deirdre is so happy to have had the opportunity to study and practise medicine... and now to be retired!