

Address by Professor Mary E Daly

UCD Medical School Dedication of Lecture Theatres,

20 December 2012.

I am delighted to have the opportunity to speak about the 3 distinguished graduates of the UCD School of Medicine, who are being honoured today for their contribution to the modern Irish state.

I will begin with Kathleen Lynn, who founded St. Ultan's Hospital for Infants.

Kathleen Lynn belongs to the first generation of Irish women medical graduates. The daughter of a Church of Ireland clergyman, at first sight she seems to be an unlikely graduate of the Catholic University Medical School. But when she graduated in 1899, the Catholic University Medical School admitted women students, whereas Trinity College, her more natural home did not. After graduation she studied in United States (not a common career path at the time for UCD/Catholic University medical graduates, they were more likely to study in Vienna, Paris or in Germany), but the USA offered much wider opportunities for women. In the USA many of the pioneering generation of women doctors, worked in institutions that they had established and which were under their control – this offered a mechanism for overcoming the gender discrimination which was rife at the time.

In 1909 having returned to Ireland, Kathleen Lynn became a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons. She failed to secure a position in the Adelaide Hospital, because she was a woman, however Sir Patrick Dun's and the Rotunda Hospital proved to be more accommodating. From 1910-1916 she held a position at the Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital – the first female resident doctor, combining this with a private practice in Rathmines.

This active medical career did not preclude an equally active role in political affairs. Her story gives us an insight into the political ferment that characterised Dublin 100 years ago, and the lives of a remarkable generation of educated women.

Kathleen Lynn was active in the suffrage movement at a time when the campaign for female suffrage was becoming increasingly militant. The

campaign was closely linked with Irish Home Rule, because the Irish Party held the balance of power in Westminster at the time, but John Redmond, refused to use their power to demand votes for women. As a consequence most politically-active Irishwomen joined more radical groups.

During the 1913 Dublin lock-out, which saw tens of thousands of Dublin labourers and their families, in dire circumstances, Kathleen Lynn worked in Liberty Hall with Constance Marckievicz, to provide food and care for destitute families – an experience that made her acutely aware of their lives and medical needs. Her involvement with Liberty Hall and James Connolly led her to join the Irish Citizen Army – which admitted women and men to the same organisation. She also taught first aid to Cumann na mBan – the female wing of the Irish Volunteers.

During the 1916 Rising she was based in Dublin's City Hall – as chief medical officer to the Citizen Army. This resulted in her losing her job at the Eye and Ear Hospital, and a spell in Kilmainham jail; she spent a further spell in prison in 1918. When Sinn Fein was reorganised in 1917, she became a vice-president; in 1922, like most republican women she sided with the anti-Treaty side.

But although she was elected to Dail Eireann in 1923, by this time she was concentrating on her medical life. In 1919 she and a number of other politically-active medical women founded St. Ultan's in Charlemont Street. The initial focus was on treating syphilitic infants – Cumann na mBan was convinced that soldiers returning from the Front were killing Irish infants – in truth syphilis was endemic in sections of the Dublin working class. St Ultan's soon began to treat other illnesses.

St Ultan's was a hospital run by women – their space in Dublin's medical community. The women doctors associated with St Ultan's had ambitions to provide the most up to date treatments available. They travelled to Europe, and they were encouraged to conduct research. In the early 1920s infant mortality in Dublin was approximately 140 per 1000; more than twice the rate in Mayo, Lynn's native county. By this time infant mortality in English and Scottish cities was falling sharply; it remained stubbornly high in Dublin until the late 1940s.

High infant mortality was caused by the poverty of the city's working class and appalling housing conditions. Many Dublin mothers were too malnourished to breast feed their children; it was difficult to maintain any standard of hygiene in tenements where water had to be collected from the one tap in the yard and carried upstairs, and where the yard was also the site of the only sanitary facility and a refuse dump. The most common causes of death were dysentery – a hot summer meant that more babies died; Pneumonia, diphtheria and scarlet fever were also significant.

Dublin was also undergoing an epidemic of TB which peaked during World War II – much later than English cities or Belfast. St Ultan's opened a dedicated TB ward; they pioneered tuberculin testing of infants in the 1930s, and was the first institution in Ireland to introduce BCG inoculation – a practice brought to Dublin from continental Europe at a time when it was not in favour in Britain. Although the range of treatments available for sick infants was very limited, St. Ultan's provided personal care for the infants of Dublin's poorest families at a time when there was an acute shortage of paediatric beds. The hospitals 52 beds – or cots – accounted for ¼ of the beds available for sick children in Dublin at the time.

Kathleen Lynn had diverse motives for founding St. Ultan's – it provided medical care for sick children like those she had met in Liberty Hall, and a supportive environment for their mothers. St Ultan's offered Lynn and her fellow women doctors, a place where they could shape their own medical careers, and make a distinctive contribution.

Kathleen Lynn died in 1955 and was buried with full military honours.

In naming a lecture theatre in UCD School of Medicine after Kathleen Lynn we are recalling a UCD female medical graduate, who worked to secure the political and career opportunities that today's women medical students and graduates, and Irish women take for granted, and honouring her contribution to the children of Dublin.

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James Ryan – one of twelve children of a county Wexford farming family, entered UCD to study medicine in 1909, the holder of a one of the first county council scholarships awarded for students to attend the new National University of Ireland. He belonged to a remarkable family who made a significant the new Irish state, to UCD and to Irish medicine – a topic for another day.

Like Kathleen Lynn, James Ryan threw himself into the exciting and highly volatile political life of Dublin of 100 years ago. He joined the UCD branch of Sinn Fein; in November 1913 he became a founding member of the Irish Volunteers, which was founded by UCD Professor Eoin MacNeill. He was sworn into the Irish Republican Brotherhood – the secret society, whose members plotted the 1916 Rising.

On Easter Sunday 1916 he delivered Eoin MacNeill's orders countermanding the Rising to the Cork Volunteers; when he heard that a Rising had actually broken out, he reported to the GPO with his medical kit and was appointed as chief medical officer. After the Rising he was interned, but he was among the first prisoners to be released, and he went back to complete his medical studies, qualifying in March 1917.

He set up general practice in Wexford town where he treated many cases during the influenza pandemic of 1918-19. When he was elected as Sinn Fein TD in the 1918 general election, he attributed this to his medical practice, because Wexford remained loyal to the Irish Parliamentary Party and the Redmond family.

James Ryan was TD for Wexford from 1918 until he retired from politics in 1965. He was among the 27 Sinn Fein TDs who took their seats in the Mansion House on 21 January 1919- the first meeting of Dail Eireann. He voted against the Treaty in 1922, and in the same year he was appointed to the staff of the City of Dublin Skin and Cancer Hospital – Hume Street – whose ultimate legacy is now represented by the Charles Institute (next door).

When the civil war broke out later that year, he picked up his medical kit once more and acted as medical officer in the Four Courts and O'Connell Street. He was later interned and went on a 36-day hunger strike, which damaged his

health and prompted him to abandon medicine in favour of farming and a business career – he founded the New Ireland Assurance Co.

In 1926 James Ryan was a founder member and treasurer of Fianna Fail. When Fianna Fail formed a government after the 1932 general election he became Minister for Agriculture. This was a very demanding position given the central place of agriculture in Ireland's economy, and the damaging trade war with Britain in the 1930s. He proved to be a very astute minister, who restrained some of the wilder proposals from other members of the Cabinet, for radical land reform or extremist self-sufficiency. He also steered Irish agriculture through the Second World War, ensuring that the country had sufficient grain, and opposition to compulsory tillage was kept under control.

As the first minister for Health and Social Welfare, he was responsible for enacting the 1947 Health Act, which provided the framework for Ireland's post-war Health Services. The detailed implementation had not been completed when Fianna Fail was defeated in the 1948 general election.

Most people are familiar with Noel Browne's tenure as Minister for Health from 1948-51 and the failure to implement the Mother and Child Scheme because of the opposition from the medical profession and the Catholic church. Much less attention has been paid to James Ryan's success in implementing most of the Mother and Child scheme in 1953. As Minister for Health he oversaw the 1953 Health Act – one of the most significant pieces of health legislation in 20<sup>th</sup> century Ireland. The very decided opposition of the Catholic Hierarchy was overcome by arranging for Sean T O Kelly, president of Ireland and Ryan's brother-in-law, to convene an unprecedented meeting of key ministers and bishops in Aras an Uachtarain.

The 1953 Act extended free or heavily subsidised hospital treatment to 85-90% of the population, and for the first time ever medical card holders were entitled to specialist hospital treatment. The 1953 Act also helped the finances of the Dublin Voluntary Hospitals, which had been treating the Dublin poor – without any remuneration – for generations; Dublin Corporation was finally forced to provide payment to the voluntary hospitals – in many instances the hospitals appear to have used these funds to expand specialist medical posts, including new sub-specialities hitherto unknown in Ireland.

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When Fianna Fail returned to office in 1957, in de Valera's last government, James Ryan became Minister for Finance, and he continued in that role when Lemass became Taoiseach, until he retired from Dail Eireann at the 1965 general election.

He was Minister for Finance at a critical time: Ireland was in a major recession; unemployment and emigration were at record levels. His appointment reflects de Valera's high opinion of his calibre; Sean Mac Entee who held the position in the previous Fianna Fail government had acquired a reputation as a conservative minister whose policies had crushed the economy.

As Minister for Finance, James Ryan gave free rein to Ken Whitaker, the young secretary of the Department of Finance – whose blueprint for economic reform – was published in November 1958 under the title *Economic Development*. Not every minister would have given Whitaker such a free hand, to the extent of letting him publish *Economic Development* under his own name.

As Minister, Ryan presided over a period of major economic transformation, and a prospering economy. His tenure saw Finance become the most important government department- responsible for economic planning, and also for Ireland's initial negotiations on membership of the EEC. He also oversaw the transformation of the Irish tax system -with the introduction of PAYE and a general sales tax.

And, bringing this story back to UCD – it was James Ryan, who as Minister for Finance, approved the capital funding for UCD's move to Belfield – the first capital funding provided by an Irish government for higher education.

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Patrick Hillery – the fifth President of Ireland – and much more, belongs to a younger generation than Lynn and Ryan. He was born in 1923 in Spanish Point, county Clare, the son of a local general practitioner. He registered as a UCD medical student in the autumn of 1939, but when it was discovered that he was only 16 years old – younger than the permitted matriculation age – he had to withdraw; he returned the following year.

In addition to his medical degree, he took a year out to complete a B.SC, graduating in 1947 with an impressive first-class honours degree in medicine.

His ambition was to follow his father as a general practitioner in Clare, and he was quite unusual at the time in embarking on a serious postgraduate training programme – as a junior doctor in the Mater and the National Maternity, and several years in hospital positions in Canada, including a residency in psychiatry. In 1950, after he returned to Ireland he took a post as an assistant medical officer in Peamont sanatorium – at a time when tackling Ireland’s TB epidemic was a national priority. While at Peamont he became involved in an international study of TB in children, which was sponsored by UNICEF.

He was selected as one of four Fianna Fail candidates for Clare in the 1951 General Election – one other candidate must be mentioned – Eamon de Valera. Paddy Hillery was elected as the second Fianna Fail TD – a remarkable achievement given the lack of family connections in the party. Following his election he returned to Clare to assist in his father’s practice, combining this with being a TD. This was a traditional, rural general practice, involving a significant number of home births, and long hours spent travelling to remote parts of the county. He often saw patients in the morning before driving to Dublin to attend Leinster House.

As De Valera did not do constituency work and rarely travelled to Clare, Patrick Hillery had to handle all Fianna Fail representations for the constituency. For many patients the distinction between the family doctor and their TD became blurred – they would often ask him about pensions or social welfare when he was making a house call.

His continuing dedication to medicine is evident – in 1955, while a TD he studied for the Diploma in Child Health – and it was during these studies that he met his wife Maeve, who is also a UCD medical graduate. In 1957 he turned

down an offer of a junior ministerial position – preferring to keep up his medical practice.

This all changed in the summer of 1959 when he became Minister for Education, in Sean Lemass's first Cabinet. At this time Education was not seen as a particularly high-profile ministry; under Patrick Hillery it became one of the significant portfolios.

When he became minister, many Irish children finished their schooling at primary level and half of all fifteen-year olds were not in school. There was no entitlement to secondary schooling – it was a lottery, dependent on family income or whether there was a school within easy reach – in many small towns and rural areas there wasn't. Access to university education was even more limited.

By the early 1960s there was a growing awareness internationally that education was a critical factor in achieving economic growth. Paddy Hillery introduced this concept to Irish political and public life, when he volunteered Ireland as a case study for a report on *Investment in Education* to be carried out by the OECD. The report, produced by a committee chaired by UCD Economics Professor Patrick Lynch, highlighted the unequal access to education by socio-economic class, geography and gender. *Investment in Education* captured the public's imagination; it made education a very hot political topic, and most intriguingly, there was little criticism of the links made between investment, the economy and education.

This report set the framework for the expansion of access to second and third-level education in the 1960s and later decades. Other aspects of the Hillery ministry must be noted: in Feb 1960 he brought a proposal to Cabinet that the government should approve and fund the construction of a new UCD science building at Belfield. In his speech in Dail Eireann introducing the estimate for the Belfield science building, he ruled out other options, such as a merger between UCD/TCD or keeping UCD in Earlsfort Terrace. He also established the Commission on Higher Education with a brief to draw up a long-term development plan for higher education; fortunately the decisions about Belfield were not dependent on the Commission's findings – it didn't report until 1967.



Paddy Hillery's thinking on education was radical – more radical than the measures introduced by subsequent ministers. He had a strong commitment to reducing social inequality; he wanted to see all children pursuing a comprehensive junior cycle at second-level with greater emphasis on technical and scientific subjects – in place of the more traditional academic syllabus; his plans for regional technical colleges envisaged a form of senior cycle college, catering to pupils aged 16+.

For reasons of time I will pass over his time as Minister for Industry and Commerce. In 1966 he became Minister for Labour – the first person to hold this position since Countess Marckievicz in early 1920s. This Ministry gave him further opportunities to address social and skills disadvantages – he set up the first retraining/upskilling programmes for workers, and provided better supports for those seeking employment.

The 1969 general election brought yet another change of portfolio when he became Minister for External Affairs – he was responsible for changing the name of the department to Foreign Affairs. He succeeded Frank Aiken who devoted a lot of the Department's energies to the UN. Under Hillery there was a significant shift in priorities: the EEC and Northern Ireland.

Jack Lynch gave Paddy Hillery responsibility for Ireland's negotiations on EEC membership. He did a very effective job, particularly on regional policy, succeeding in having all of Ireland classified as underdeveloped and therefore eligible for EEC funding. He also oversaw the 1972 referendum on membership which was supported by 85% of voters.

As all this was happening, the crisis in Northern Ireland created major difficulties for the government, especially in its relations with Britain. When Paddy Hillery was being brought around Iveagh House for the first time, he is reported to have asked 'where is the Northern Ireland desk'; the blunt answer was that there wasn't one, in Iveagh House or anywhere else. It was under Hillery that the Northern Ireland section in Iveagh House was established – with the understanding that they would work closely with the Taoiseach's office – this was the model that eventually delivered the Good Friday Agreement. There was no precedent for Irish government ministers or civil servants discussing Northern Ireland matters with their British counterparts.

During Paddy Hillery's term as minister the first uncertain steps towards some form of Anglo-Irish contacts on Northern Ireland emerged – sometimes on the side of EEC negotiations, but also when the Hillery family travelled to England for family visits. Comments in British files indicate that British ministers and senior officials came to trust and respect him. He was also a trusted supporter of Jack Lynch during the 1970 Arms Crisis and other very difficult episodes in Northern Ireland affairs.

In 1973 he moved to Brussels as the first EEC Commissioner for Social Affairs – a position that again showed his compassion for the underprivileged; the Commission for Social Affairs pushed for European-wide protection for workers; social benefits, and funding to retrain the unemployed.

His term as commissioner was cut short in 1976, when Fianna Fail leader Jack Lynch asked him to agree to being nominated as President of Ireland. The respect that he commanded is evident, in that he was unopposed then and in his second term. The importance of the Hillery Presidency has not been fully appreciated. He took office following the resignation of Cearbhaill O Dalaigh. He restored the standing of the Presidency after this controversial episode, and he protected the office during one of the most difficult periods in recent Irish history: a period of unstable governments, major tensions in Northern Ireland, and some highly acrimonious domestic political events.

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So to summarise and conclude: The careers of these 3 distinguished UCD medical graduates have a common theme in public service and the contributions that they each made to the Irish state. As such they reflect the central role that UCD has played in the achievement of an independent Ireland and its subsequent history.

These dedications are timely as we embark on events to commemorate the founding of the Irish state. I hope that they may help to remind UCD students and the faculty who will lecture in these theatres of UCD's contribution and the specific contributions made by these 3 medical graduates.

Mary E Daly