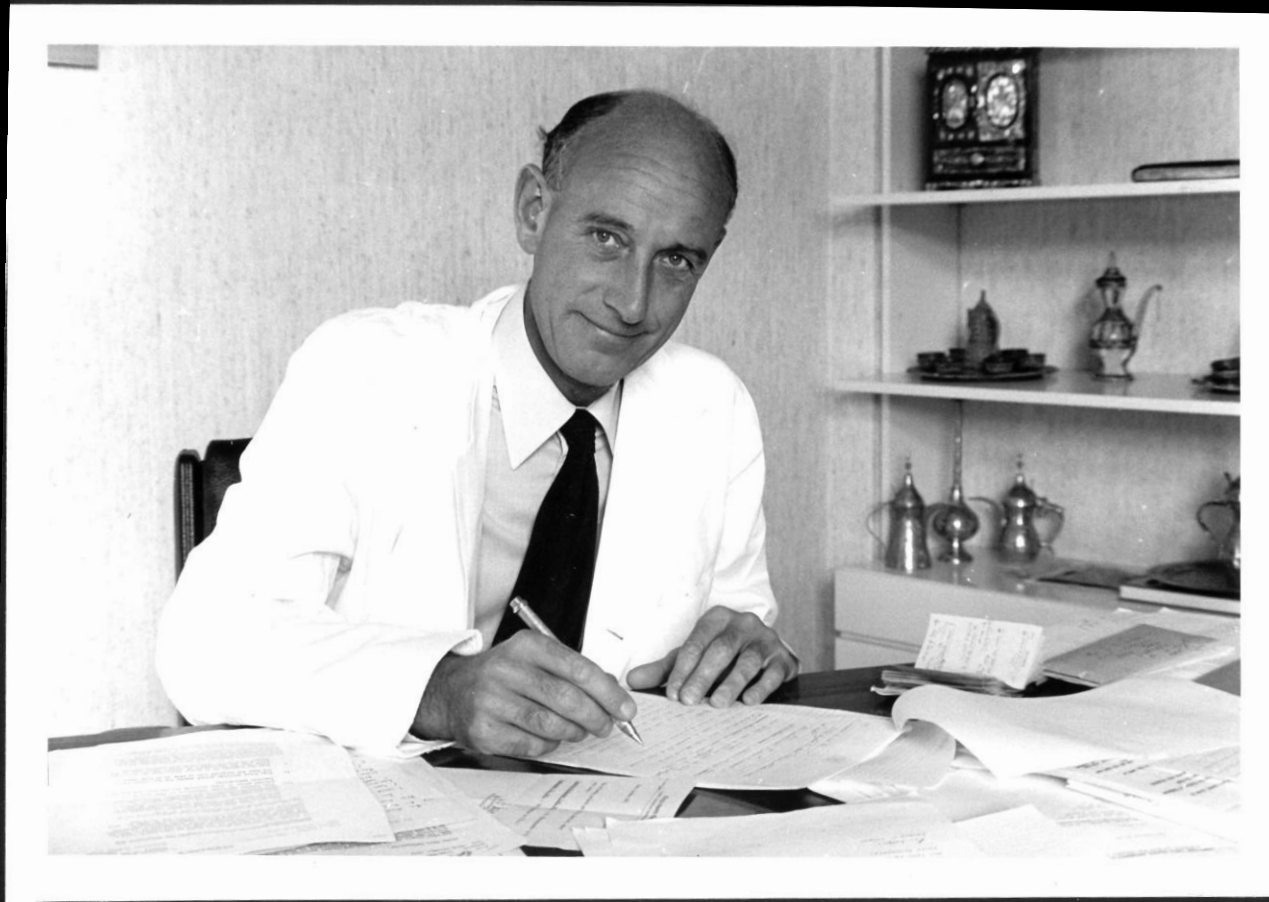


PROFESSOR ROGER WILLIAMS, CBE  
1931- 2020

*Liber Amicorum*



*'Book of Friends'*

It was whilst our father was Ambassador to the United Kingdom that he had the good fortune to meet Roger. They soon became firm friends, and eventually we came to know him and appreciate his qualities. Though our paths later took us to different countries, the friendship continued and retained its warmth, and his visits were much appreciated.

Our father, slightly older than Roger, is now rather frail. He has asked us to write on behalf of the whole family to express gratitude for Roger's friendship and interest in the family.

May he rest in peace.

Khalid and Amer Al Tajir, on behalf of His Excellency Mehdi Al Tajir and family

I have known Roger since the early 1990s and was greatly honoured to have been invited in 2005 to be a Trustee of the Foundation for Liver Research. Over these last 15 years, I have witnessed the extraordinary energy, vision, determination, leadership and inspiration this remarkable man has demonstrated, and which has resulted in the Institute of Hepatology's current impeccable reputation and research record. Universally acknowledged as a world leader in hepatology, his legacy is greatly improved knowledge and treatment of liver disease resulting in better and longer lives for many thousands of men, women and children.

Sir Jeremy Elwes

Roger created hepatology in the 1960's and 1970's, throughout the 1980's and 1990's he remained at the forefront in liver transplantation and acute liver failure, and when he handed over some of his clinical hepatology workload he developed the Institute of Hepatology as a beacon of excellence in liver research at University College and then back at Kings. However, alongside all of this clinical and research work he developed an interest, and then an expertise in health policy and advocacy. He persuaded the Lancet to back liver disease with the first Lancet Commission in 2014, and then persuaded them to continue their support with the first standing Lancet Commission which has reported every year since. Alongside this he engaged in a series of head to meetings with policymakers, health secretaries and ministers, NHS leaders and CMOs. His combination of charm and honesty did more to advance the cause of liver disease within government and the NHS than any of the pressure groups. In his later years he worked harder than most physicians in their 20's and 30's, he was a force of nature and his lifelong and unflinching commitment to liver disease will not be forgotten. Roger gave me my first job in liver disease and what may well be my last job in liver disease, he was a lifelong mentor, supporter and inspiration, but what I will remember most is his kindness.

Professor Nick Sheron



Trustees meeting at the Ironmongers' Hall, December 2017

Professor Williams was extraordinary. Everybody who speaks of him remembers his energy, his enthusiasm, his intellect and certainly he gave his all in everything he did and expected no less of everyone else. I started working for him in July 1997 and have many memories of him, not least the small requests he would make that were actually quite large. A prolific reader of journals and papers, fiction was more of a rarity and I remember his enthusiasm for one author having read his latest novel on holiday. "Invite him to dinner", Prof said. It took a while and some persuasive conversations with the publisher, but dinner was arranged, the first of many as they became good friends. I was less successful in actioning his instruction when he was delayed on the way back from one overseas meeting, with a short stopover time in London. "Tell them to hold the plane" he boomed down the phone. Since it was Prof asking, I gave it a go.

Prof's patients not only trusted his skill and his kindness but knew he would go that extra mile and to those who are facing severe illness, that is an immense comfort. Prof Williams seems to me the definition of a life well-lived. He gave his all and this was reflected back in the fondness and admiration of all who knew him, and who will remember him.

Natalie Day

He will be missed by many around the world.

Bill Reed, Australia

I will miss him and owe him a lot personally. He taught me a huge amount and was very instrumental in my career path.

Professor Steven Ryder

He was just larger than life and a huge inspiration to me and many, many more ... and indeed I was fond of him too...particularly as we got off to a very rocky start when I was his junior registrar!

Dr Imogen Mitchell

Roger was already a legend during his life-time and his legacy will last. As I look back on Roger's achievements, four aspects stand out: his leadership, his vision, his enthusiasm and his personal charm. Others have spoken to the impact he has had on patients, clinicians and scientists. I would like to express my deep gratitude for what he has done for me: I have abiding memories of my first days on the unit: the Saturday morning clinical rounds were hugely educational but stressful as, as the most junior clinician I was the butt of his questions and quickly learned how skilled Roger was in leading people down the garden path, albeit with a twinkle in his eye. Roger leaves behind a large cohort of people whose lives he has affected and improved and I remain proud to be included in that group. Roger you will be missed but never forgotten!

James Neuberger

Dear Stephanie and family

It is hard very hard for me to accept that Roger is no longer with us, having been associated with him for almost 40 years – since 1981. During this time, I have had the privilege to know him and work with him through the highs and lows in the three Institutes for Liver Diseases, which Roger created from scratch.

When I took up my first Wellcome Trust Research Fellowship at the Liver Unit at King's (1981), it was only six months after starting when Roger asked whether I have completed my first paper. The Silver Jubilee of the Liver Unit was celebrated in 1991 and a dedicated silver Gut supplement included remarkable forwards: from Prof. Sheila Sherlock "1066 was a memorable year: so was 1966, the year in which Roger Williams gave up the tranquillity of Southampton for a pioneering role at King's College Hospital. And what a pioneer he has been", from Prof. Rudy Preisig "May Roger roll on...", from Prof. Willis Maddrey "the emergence of modern hepatology has been facilitated by the formation and continued contributions of the Liver Unit at King's". In 1996, instead of celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Liver Unit, we had to "pack our bags" and move out through the fire escape - I joined Roger into a jump of uncertainty - setting up the Institute of Hepatology at UCL. At the beginning Roger had no office; in the newly created liver clinic at UCL, Roger and I used to stare at each other hoping that 1-2 patients will appear. How different everything was just a couple of years later on! The Institute of Hepatology arose from the ground to become a leading center for basic and clinical research in liver. My farewell party in the Institute was in 2007 (photo below) as I took a position as Global Head Hepatitis and Transplantation at Novartis in Basel, Switzerland. However, my association and support of Roger carried on - initially as Trustee to the Foundation for Liver Research, followed by 10 years as Scientific Advisor to the Foundation (photo below). The Golden Jubilee - 50 years of Liver Research (1966-2016), back at King's, was a triumph for Roger and a memorable celebration for the family of "old boys and girls" from all three liver institutes, set up by Roger.

Along with the professional memories over the years, my wife Rossi and I will cherish the memories from our personal interactions with Roger and Stephanie - like the celebrations at Mansion House and Crosby Hall, Stephanie's 60th birthday at Byron's Chambers, Roger's 80th birthday at Brickworth, "Don Carlos" at the Royal Opera House and many other occasions.

Roger was a remarkable person who made a difference to the life of many patients and doctors worldwide. Apart from creating three leading liver institutes in succession, Roger's unparalleled legacy includes the first liver transplantation in Europe, the first dedicated unit for the management of acute liver failure, initiating the first live-related liver transplant programme in the UK, founder of the Lancet Commission and above all - training and inspiring hundreds of physicians and scientists worldwide to work on liver. Roger was a true and determined competitor in all he undertook, striving for top results and achievements, to the end of his life. His legacy will live on, carried further by those who he trained and inspired to bring benefit to patients with liver diseases and the continuing success of hepatology.

Professor Nikolai Naoumov



Nikolai's farewell from UCL, 2007

"A dominating leader in his field. As Minister for Health in the mid-90s I was mostly accorded deference - until Roger came through the door.

He told it as it was and - as his experience was rooted in years of practice, innovation success, and intellectual rigour - he was highly influential.

Sociable and dedicated to his maritime hobby, Roger's was a rounded persona and his friendship highly valued."

Gerald Malone, Minister for Health  
1994-97 - MP for Winchester 1992-97

During our lifetime, we only meet a few people who will go on to change the world and deeply influence our own lives. Roger Williams was a giant in medicine who had a huge impact on many areas and colleagues, and always searched for excellence and innovation. He created the world-leading liver unit at King's college, dedicated to research into liver disorders based on a multidisciplinary group of scientists, physicians and surgeons. Together with Sir Roy Calne, he pioneered liver transplantation in the UK, the first liver transplant at King's College Hospital having been carried out on September 28, 1968. With about 3000 publications and so many local and international honours, he will remain one of the most prolific and recognised clinical scientists.

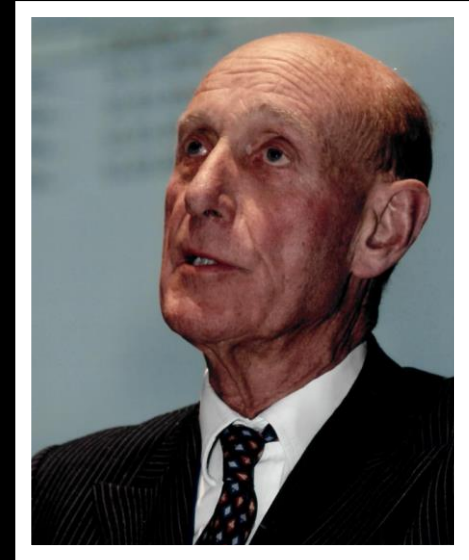
I met Roger Williams many times during my career, mostly during meetings. However, I had the great privilege of getting to know him deeper over the past 3 years through several visits to his Institute of Hepatology at King's College and social gatherings. Roger had a gentle, very sharp and bright personality with the exceptional ability to see beyond what anyone else could see. He was not only a visionary scientist and clinician but also possessed the ability to quickly grasp the potential and skills of others, which gave him the aptitude to build solid projects and produce many new leaders in liver disease. In 2018, I invited Roger to deliver the "Living Legend" lecture at the World Congress of the International Hepato-Biliary Association (IHPBA) in Geneva, Switzerland. He beautifully presented the 50-year history of liver transplantation. Like so many others, I will greatly miss Roger. However, I feel fortunate to have been close to him and benefitted so much from our interactions.

Professor Pierre Clavien

Roger Williams

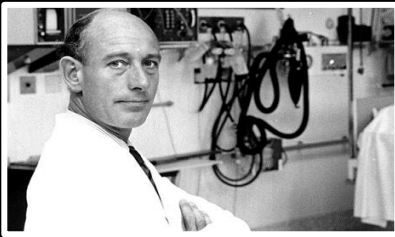
The most notable thing about Roger was his energy and love of both his work and life in general. We worked so well together at the RCP - when he took over the International Department, he told me he would 'conduct the orchestra.' He was a great conductor, not only there, but with his other endeavours.

Professor Dame Carol Black



"It was a privilege and pleasure getting to know Roger, and to work with him and the Institute. His unwavering commitment to scholarship, research for the benefit of patients, and the careers of the Institute's staff and students was inspirational and deeply valued by the School and King's. Roger was a true visionary, was unfailingly gracious, and always retained a healthy sense of humour. He will be sorely missed by all, and my thoughts are with his family, friends and colleagues."

Michael Malim FRS, Head of School of Immunology & Microbial Sciences, King's College London



Professor Roger Williams

# King's College London

**Professor Roger Williams, CBE, 1931 – 2020**

**Tribute to Professor Roger Williams, Director of the Institute of Hepatology and Foundation for Liver Research**

Professor Roger Williams, Director of the Institute of Hepatology and Foundation for Liver Research passed away on 26th July. Widely recognised as a leader in his field, he established the world-renowned Institute of Liver Studies at King's College Hospital (KCH) in the 1960s and was Director of the Institute of Hepatology at UCL between 1994-2016. More recently he relocated the Institute of Hepatology back to the King's Denmark Hill campus in 2016.

Professor Edward Byrne, Principal and President of King's College London said 'I am deeply saddened to hear of Professor Williams' death. He was widely regarded as a leader in his field, contributing to our understanding of liver function and disease over a long career. Roger spent two significant periods of his career based with us at King's and he spent many years establishing us as the UK's major hepatology centre, before moving to UCL for a short period. We were very pleased to welcome him back when the Institute returned to King's a few years ago and my thoughts and deep sympathies are with his family.'

Professor Williams' clinical and research interests were in acute liver failure, liver transplantation and complications of cirrhosis and management of viral hepatitis. Over the course of his long career he was responsible for numerous innovations in patient care, perhaps one of the most significant being the first liver transplant carried out in the UK in 1968.

He was a Fellow of the Academy of Medical Sciences and had received many honorary fellowships, prizes and awards throughout his career. The Institute of Hepatology, of which he was Director, is funded by the charity he established in 1974, the Foundation for Liver Research, and it is affiliated to King's College London and KCH which is globally renowned for managing liver diseases of all causes and is currently running Europe's largest liver transplant programme.

Professor Sir Robert Lechler, Provost and Vice-President (Health) at King's said 'Roger was a great friend and colleague and he will be missed by many of us here at King's. It is through working in collaboration with clinicians like Roger and the Institute of Hepatology that we can turn our research into clinical practice to benefit patients on the ward. He gave his time generously to his patients, colleagues and students and I send my deepest condolences to his family at this sad time.'

Professor Richard Trembath, Executive Dean, Faculty of Life Sciences and Medicine said, 'In addition to the legion of research contributions Roger made over his long career, he was responsible for training several generations of leading Hepatologists, working around the world and to whom he remained a mentor and friend. On behalf of the Faculty, may I convey our most sincere condolences to his family, and his colleagues at the Institute.'

Professor Michael Malim, Head of the School of Immunology & Microbial Sciences said 'It has been a privilege and pleasure working with Roger and his Institute. His drive and commitment to the complete translational research pathway was inspirational, and his thoughtful support for the careers of the Institute's staff and students was deeply valued. Roger was a true visionary and scholar, yet always retained a healthy sense of humour. He will be sorely missed, and my thoughts are with his family, friends and colleagues at this very sad time.'

The thoughts and deepest sympathies of the King's community are with Professor Williams' family, work colleagues and friends.

I can't say how sorry I am and how much I respected him, was indebted to him for literally saving my own life and came to find him a true friend over many years. What a loss.

Mr Dugald Barr



*Photo of Prof and Stephanie at his beloved sailing taken on Sydney Harbour in May 2008. He enjoyed that day on the harbour very much and I remember it as if it was yesterday. Our deepest condolences and love from Linda, Stephen, Ashlin and Angus.*

Professor Stephen Riordan

Professor Roger Williams was a true giant in the field of liver health and demonstrated tremendous leadership in convening the Lancet Standing Commission on Liver Disease. Liver disease affects some of the most vulnerable members of our society and Roger used his indefatigable energies and powers of persuasion to raise awareness of its impact amongst UK policy makers, bringing an issue into the spotlight which for too long has been hidden behind closed doors.

Roger was an inspirational role model who proactively sought out opportunities to support early career researchers and build enthusiasm for change. It is a privilege to have been his colleague and I will miss him dearly. He leaves behind an exceptional legacy and an abundance of fond memories.

Dr Katherine Severi, CEO of the Institute of Alcohol Studies

Having not had worked with Prof but being only too aware of his reputation as a giant in the field of Hepatology, it was a real privilege to have seen the great man in action though the work of the Lancet Commission. His life's work leaves an incredible legacy.

Dr Andrew Yeoman



# IAS – Institute of Alcohol Studies

## In Memoriam: Roger Williams, ‘a true giant in the field of liver health’

**Professor Williams CBE FRCS FRCP FRCPE FRACP FMedSci** (born 28 August 1931 – 25 July 2020) was a pioneer in many areas of hepatology, including the delivery of an integrated model of liver care and being a key part of the team that performed the first liver transplant in the UK at King’s College Hospital London in 1968.

His influence was also felt in liver disease research, publishing many of the key papers advancing care in liver disease and founding institutes at King’s and University College London to further hepatology research.

He founded The Lancet commission on liver disease in 2013, in addition to the European Association for the Study of the Liver (EASL), on which he served as a chairman in 1983 and as honorary president in 2008.

In 1993 Professor Williams was given an CBE for his services to medicine. He remained an active and passionate advocate for improvement in the care of patients with liver disease to the end of his life.

Tributes poured in from colleagues, acquaintances and fellow public health experts who worked with him over the years.

Commenting on his legacy, IAS chief Dr Katherine Severi said:

‘Professor Roger Williams was a true giant in the field of liver health and demonstrated tremendous leadership in convening the Lancet Standing Commission on Liver Disease. Liver disease affects some of the most vulnerable members of our society and Roger used his indefatigable energies and powers of persuasion to raise awareness of its impact amongst UK policy makers, bringing an issue into the spotlight which for too long has been hidden behind closed doors.

‘Roger was an inspirational role model who proactively sought out opportunities to support early career researchers and build enthusiasm for change. It is a privilege to have been his colleague and I will miss him dearly. He leaves behind an exceptional legacy and an abundance of fond memories.’



I first met Prof in 2009, when he mock interviewed me for a Fellowship interview. Although he was tough, he was always supportive, and ever since our first meeting he continued to be an incredible mentor to me, no matter the prevailing ‘political’ circumstances. I was thrilled to be able to work with him again in 2016, at the new Institute at King’s. We met weekly, and our wide-ranging chats would always begin with science and liver disease but often extend to politics and other worldly matters. I miss him greatly, but am forever grateful for the influence he’s had on my career and life. My deep condolences go out to Stephanie and the rest of the family.

Dr Gautam Mehta

*It is difficult to overestimate the contribution that Roger made to hepatology and medical science. Whilst we didn’t always agree Roger was fiercely supportive of my career and that of my group and we enjoyed many hours discussing research challenges. It was an honour and a privilege to be invited to become a Trustee of The Institute.*

*John Iredale*

I first met Dr Roger Williams in September 1983 when I came over to King's from Bart's where I had spent the previous three years as a GI fellow. I was looking to expand my experience with the hope of improving my chances of returning to Ireland. Roger interviewed me and very generously offered to take me into 'the Unit'. This brief interaction had profound implications for my life, although it did not get me back to Ireland. I came to King's in November 1983 and stayed until June 1985, when my family and I moved to the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, once again as a fellow, and still carrying the dream of returning to Ireland. When I got here, I found that, out of all the academics with whom I had been fortunate to work, Roger was the only one known among my new colleagues in the US. It was a practical demonstration of the world-reach of Roger's reputation, and the reputation of the Liver Unit.

Even though I had moved to the United States ostensibly to further my thesis work on regulatory peptides, it became clear immediately that everyone, especially my superiors, saw me as a hepatologist. How could it not be so? I had trained under Professor Roger Williams.

My arrival in Michigan happened to coincide with the start of their liver transplant program, and my training with the Kings-Cambridge Liver Transplant program vaulted me forward. After a couple of years, regulatory peptides were left aside, and I had become the first medical director of the University of Michigan Liver Transplant Program, bearing witness (as best I could) to the education that I had received with Roger. The principals I learnt at the Liver Unit included a commitment to collect and analyze the data, whether from clinical or bench work, to participate in the hubbub of the academic world, to be open to new ideas and to share your knowledge generously. I have tried to follow those principals for the next thirty-five years, all the while recognizing my gratitude to Roger.

Roger has left a huge imprint on hepatology. He forged the modern multidisciplinary model of liver care. He was an early advocate for liver transplantation and particularly by his vision established the central role of hepatology in all aspects of liver transplant medicine. He built the Liver Unit in all its iterations as a locus where clinical medicine and cutting-edge basic research met, and each enhanced the other. There is no area of hepatology that his research did not reach and advance.

Finally, I want to draw attention to a particular attribute that Roger had in abundance. Roger was an educator and proselytizer for improving liver care all around the world. Others can attest to the influence of his former fellows in Australia, New Zealand, Continental Europe, India, Pakistan, and the countries of the middle east. I would just point to his commitment to training Irish men and women. Several returned to Ireland and contributed greatly to the well-being of many Irish patients. Others, like myself, were scattered like 'the Wild Geese' and have continued to carry to the flame in various corners of the world.

I offer my condolences to Stephanie and the family.

Ar dheist Dé go raibh a anam dílis.'

Michael Ronan Lucey MD, FRCPI, University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health

*It is difficult for me to gloss the memory of Prof. Roger Williams, after a so long and fruitful life in which he has meant so much to so many people.*

*It is impossible for me to identify any figure in Hepatology who has contributed so much to the development of this specialty and who has meant so much to the new generations of Hepatologists around the world.*

*My professional relationship with Prof. Williams began in 2000, when I started working in the field of liver support, an area in which he was also a pioneer. It was from here that our meetings took place regularly over the years, especially during the annual meetings of the EASL, AASLD and, on some occasions, the APASL. Our long talks on this topic were always been a source of knowledge and inspiration for me.*

*Our professional relationship evolved over the years into a more personal one, in which his lovely wife Stephanie was also frequently involved. In this regard, I still remember the emotion of the two of them in Washington DC, when we met together hours before he was awarded by the AASLD for his long and successful career.*

*His sympathy, his kindness, his contagious joy, his unstoppable enthusiasm and, also, the growing signs of friendship that gave me in recent years will always remain in my memory.*

*I will miss you Prof. Williams!*

*Josep M<sup>a</sup> Torner MD, MBA*

Loyalty, courage and consistency were at the heart of Roger's nature. He was a member of my Advisory Council for seventeen years and practically never missed a meeting even when he was extremely busy with his medical research. He was well aware that we were dealing with delicate issues but that did not deter him from giving his views. He stood out as someone who cut through the detail and focussed very effectively on the main point. We will greatly miss him as will his many friends and colleagues.

Andrew Green (Lord Green of Deddington)  
President of Migration Watch UK

I first encountered Roger Williams when I was a student at Kings in the 1980s; his reputation amongst the student body was daunting, but nowhere near as much as his actual presence. His booming voice and aura of authority made the students and junior doctors tremble. Encountering Roger again as a consultant was an entirely different experience. He was interested in all that goes on in the world of hepatology and was incredibly supportive of the work of BASL and EASL. He was rarely missing from important national and international conferences and invariable had a crucial question to pose to presenters. He will be remembered and missed by the British and International communities of hepatologists, both for his larger than life personality and his enormous contribution to the field.'

Professor Mark Thursz

DR BEN SPENCER MP  
RUNNYMEDE AND WEYBRIDGE



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

25/08/2020

*In Memory of Prof Williams,*

I knew Professor Williams for over five years through his work and leadership in Conservative Health. He personally supported me during my early political career such as through helping me to gain exposure at policy events, and I remain forever in his debt.

While his excellence academically and clinically is undisputed, he was also an inspirational leader, using his charisma, tenacity, and force of character to drive through policy change in healthcare.

Professor Williams may no longer be with us, and I will dearly miss him, but his legacy remains, and continues to be felt by many.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Ben Spencer', written in a cursive style.

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020 7219 6783

www.drben Spencer.org.uk  
@DrBenSpencer

My first reading of Professor Williams's work was when I was a fifth year medical student and I had to prepare an exam essay on splenomegaly in liver cirrhosis. While all the other literature sources insisted that this type of splenomegaly was due to congestion consequent to portal hypertension, Professor Williams suggested that it was, at least in part, due also to spleen hyperplasia and fibrosis. He proved this by attending autopsies, collecting the spleen and measuring the length and diameter of the spleen artery which were both significantly increased. Since then and through my whole training as a hepatologist, I treasured Professor Williams's research and review papers. It took many years before I was able to meet him in person, more years to be able to speak to him for the first time and even more to be actually noticed by him. In 2012, before I moved to the UCL/Royal Free Hospital, he was the first non-UCL colleague to invite me to dinner (at his club and then at his home) and officially welcome me in London. In these last eight years we have seen each other regularly at London-based meetings or simply at lunch. I have greatly appreciated his honesty and advice and I only regret that our 1:1 meetings have not been more frequent. In December 2015, we flew back together from India with an overnight flight and I could not believe I had been speaking to Roger for hours about Hepatology and life in general. I am very saddened that I will not see him in person again. However, his legacy is so strong and he will continue to motivate our enthusiasm and love for Hepatology.

Professor Massimo Pinzani

*In the late seventies I had the pleasure and honour to visit him at King's. He was very interested in our hemochromatosis findings from Central Sweden and gave support for further studies. More recently we got new contacts in two studies on Wilson's disease 2012 and 2017.*

*K. Sigvard Olsson, University of Göteborg*

In addition to his medical work Roger found the time over many years to serve as a trustee of the Al Tajir Trust. As Chairman I know that Roger's commitment to the Trust was highly valued by His Excellency Mohammed Mahdi Al Tajir, the Trust's donor, and his family. It was also greatly appreciated by his fellow trustees and by the Director and staff at the Trust. We all benefited from his shrewd and positive advice as the Trust made decisions on grants to institutions supporting Islamic culture and scholarships to needy students from the Middle East.

Professor Alan Jones, Al Tajir Trust

Very sad news with regards Prof's passing. He will be sadly missed.

Yalda Sharifi

*I am truly sorry to hear that. He was a great man and a good friend.*

*Tony Segal*

I am proud and honoured to say that Prof Williams has been one of my mentors. I have always admired his great mind, his leadership, and his wit. Since our first meeting, I was struck by his vision and his will to always look at the future. He was a true motivator. He pushed me to be better always with great support and wise words. Not a single time I met with him I left the room without knowing something new about science, research and being a leader. His gifts to the world of medicine and hepatology are legendary and will be remembered forever. He will continue to inspire all of us.

He will be greatly missed.

Luca Urbani



Having known Roger since childhood, there are countless memories and stories associated with the very special friendship he shared with our father, Ralph.

They were ever excitedly 'plotting' venture after venture, with their special gusto and enthusiasm. Our father was ever admiring of his great friend and colleague, who seemed to make the impossible possible, with his unique way and persuasive means. It was a wonderful collaboration, both personally and professionally which continued right up until our father's death almost four years ago now. His huge presence in our family life, led to our unquestioning support to continue their joint ventures these last few years.

Indeed, I have a very happy memory of visiting the Institute a couple of years ago, for an international meeting-the lecture room was bursting with luminaries and students alike and the atmosphere was one of special collegiality. Roger was insistent on showing me around, wanting me to meet the team and see all the terrific activity. I was hugely taken by the trouble he took, especially at a time when he was very much in the spotlight with many other demands.

In recent years, I enjoyed professional associations as he collaborated with my oncology colleagues and it was quite thrilling to see the energy and commitment (and of course new ideas), which he continued to bring into practice.

What a legacy he leaves, with so many benefitting from his brilliance and with treasured memories which will continue to inspire those he touched.

Sending our sincere condolences and warmest wishes to all the family,

Dr Michelle Kohn FRCP

Roger Williams has been such a vibrant, energetic, productive person throughout so much of my life in health policy and medicine. His achievements at The Institute of Hepatology and the Foundation for Liver Research remain lasting landmarks. Roger's intellectual and academic ability, alongside his evidently formidable clinical skills and a great desire to make a difference set him apart from many others. Always with a project, always with a plan, always looking to advance the cause; he was truly a splendid person. Being with him was always the greatest fun with his contagious enthusiasm, range of passions and refusal to take no for an answer.

Only on his sudden death did I realise that he was 88. He felt 20 years younger. In any event it's a pretty long life with no minute wasted. If not medicine it was farming, sailing, the family and much else. He certainly leaves a lasting legacy in the world of hepatology and liver disease. We have all, also, lost a tremendous, admirable, life enhancing friend.

*Sincere condolences to family and colleagues alike.*

Baroness Virginia Bottomley

I am currently the Chief Executive of King's College Hospital. As a Gastrointestinal Radiologist myself, I have been very aware of Professor Williams' outstanding skill and reputation for many years. Latterly, it has been an absolute personal pleasure and privilege to have met Roger on several occasions since I commenced in post last year. I will remember him fondly.

Prof Clive Kay  
Chief Executive  
King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust



## A Selection of Twitter Tributes

<https://twitter.com/drgautammehta/timelines/1300772843265970176>

**Gautam Mehta** He must have saved thousands of lives. Pioneered liver transplantation in the UK, drove forward liver failure and cirrhosis research, and pushed for changes in alcohol and obesity policy. A true great in every sense.

**Richard Horton, Editor of The Lancet** Roger Williams. I miss this man. We didn't agree about politics, but he was my friend, my mentor, and an inspiration. RIP Roger. I loved you.

**Prof Rajiv Jalan** It is with a very heavy heart that I share the terrible news that Prof Roger Williams died yesterday after battling with a cardiac event. A really sad day for Hepatology. Will miss his spirit...'

... mentored many, many Hepatologists who went out around the world to train the next generation... goes on and on... both my mentors were trained by Prof Williams; first Robin Walker and then Peter Hayes! In Hindi he is called the 'Guru.'

**Peter Rice** This is sad news. I knew of Roger Williams by reputation and first met him around 3 years ago on the Lancet Liver Commission. He was full of vigour and he was a true advocate for effective prevention of alcohol harm. He saved many lives and improved many more. Thanks Roger.

**Vishal C Patel** Hard to process for those of us whom Prof Williams mentored daily at the Institute of Hepatology which he set up back at Denmark Hill where it all began.

**Gail Walker** So sorry to read of death of Prof Roger Williams, a gentleman of immense skill & authority who, treating George Best as he battled alcoholism to the death, never wavered in his compassion. I can see him yet, so vexed, leaving that wee house in Burren Way on the day of the funeral.

Roger Williams and I met for the first time via written mail in 1973 when I applied for a fellowship to his Liver Unit at Kings in London. Our last communication, a few months ago, was by email this time, and we expressed regret that Covid was going to postpone our annual get-together at the European liver meeting – EASL. We cautioned each other to be careful. And now, forty-six years of association that developed into years of friendship, alas has ended.

On my second day in the Liver Unit, a Tuesday, a tall, boisterous man in a suit strode down the length of the unit waving his arms almost yelling “Research meeting, research meeting!”. “Who is that guy?” I asked. A perplexed colleague looked at me strangely and said, “That’s Roger Williams”. And so, it began.

Every Tuesday afternoon, under Roger’s leadership, we reviewed our research, prepared for formal presentations, and expressed ideas for exploration. Every research fellow was scheduled for a turn. It was a wonderful gathering to learn, think, and polish our presentations.

Roger’s Saturday morning meetings were famous. Attended by Research Fellows exclusively, the only exception being visiting Professors from around the world, four patient case studies were presented. After a very brief history, Roger might be heard to say “What a stroke of luck we have Dr Bailey from the Commonwealth to discuss this case.” and Dr Bailey had better be on his toes! We saw patients with usual and unusual pathology referred to Roger from around the world. Here we learned so much and we developed our clinical skills as never before. You might be out very late on a Friday night, but you never missed Saturday rounds, despite having to pay 3p for a coffee.

Roger Williams influenced liver medicine, its practice, research, and education as no other - at Kings, South London, London, the United Kingdom, Europe, and the World. His leadership shaped graduates and their influence on others in their homelands from individual patient care to major international societies.

Somewhere along the line, Roger and I became personal friends. Perhaps it was crewing on his yacht at Cowes Week when a force 8 storm destroyed our spinnaker and cracked the main mast on the vessel beside us. Despite the experienced sailors on board being clearly terrified, Roger steered the boat with a big smile while my wife Janet and I sat, strapped in, not certain whether we should be similarly terrified or impressed. Over the years, despite my returning to Canada, Roger and I continued to be in touch, occasionally enjoying each other’s company in many cities around the world, trading stories and having fun.

May those influenced by Roger Williams remember and recognize his contribution.

My best to his devoted staff whom I know miss him, as will I. And most sincere condolences to Stephanie and Roger’s family who will miss him the most.

**Dr Robert Bailey, University of Alberta, Canada**



Very sorry to hear of Roger’s passing.

I was Senior Lecturer in his Unit 1976 - 1978. The unit by that time had gained a National and International reputation. I succeeded Iain Murray-Lyon who left to pursue a very distinguished career at Charing Cross. Adrian Edlestone, Mike Davis and I were the three Senior Lectures at the time.

Perhaps I had a slight advantage of not having worked for Roger previously as at the time Roger was not in love with the concept of controlled clinical trials. After ‘spirited’ discussions his seminal trial of injection sclerotherapy for oesophageal varicose was successfully completed. These were heady times on the unit-Roger orchestrating significant advances in so many areas of liver disease particularly in the field of liver transplantation, an area that a number of us felt he didn’t receive the recognition that he deserved.

Since leaving the unit I found, like so many of my colleagues, that Rogers support loyalty and friendship has been unsurpassed. It has been a privilege to have been a small part of his unbelievably distinguished career.

David Silk

Roger Williams was the most remarkable man, constructively competitive and always keen to make things happen.

I first met him as a transplant patient at King's in 1989. Later on, I became a trustee of the charity which he created, the Foundation for Liver Research, and subsequently Chairman of the trustees. We had interests in common and gradually became firm friends.

A big personality, Roger was an inspiration to many aspiring hepatologists and gave special emphasis to their training, not only in his clinical work, but also in his research into liver disease generally. His epitaph will be found in the large number of liver specialists worldwide who learned their trade at his feet.

Michael Orr

Farewell Roger, formidable mentor and friend for over 40 years; we owe you our academic careers and our approach to research. You'll be missed, but the seeds you sowed have resulted in an everlasting forest.

Giorgina and Diego Vergani

He was a truly amazing man and will be greatly missed.

Dr James Ferguson

It has been one of the true high points of my career to have known and worked with Dr. Roger Williams at King's College Hospital in London. I came to King's in July 1976 on a Pillsbury Travel Fellowship Award to spend 12 months as an overseas research fellow from the United States. Following a month of visiting with each research group, I settled on autoimmune hepatitis with Ian McFarlane and Adrian Eddleston. The Liver Unit in those days was a beehive of activity with Roger closely monitoring it all – imperious to some, but always friendly and cordial to me. I came to respect his deep fund of knowledge as well as his clinical wisdom. When my research proved adequate for publication, and the New England Journal of Medicine expressed an interest, Roger stepped in to settle an authorship dispute in a wise and collegial manner. My 12-month fellowship was extended to 18 months, and just prior to my departure back to the USA, Roger invited me and my wife Donna to his house for cocktails. It was a wonderful gesture which reflected his gentlemanly manner.

Over the ensuing 40+ years, we kept in touch and met regularly for dinners at AASLD and occasionally EASL. I had the good fortune to meet Stephanie whom I admired greatly. She and Roger made a wonderful couple. In 2016, I was honored to be invited by Roger to the 50th Anniversary of the Liver Unit and asked to give a brief recollection of my time at King's. In creating that short speech, I was able to think over all my wonderful memories (and some a little traumatic) during my time there and in the U.K. Roger's memory will live on in the annals of hepatology for many years to come as one of the true visionaries of the field. I cherish his mentorship and friendship close to my heart.

It was the best of times!

Donald M. Jensen, MD, FACP, FAASLD  
Rush University Medical Center  
Chicago, IL, USA

Regarding Journal Club – I hope he is virtually listening in . . . 😊

Shirin Khorsandi



As one of the few British hepatologists who never worked directly with Roger I can perhaps assess him without confounding memories from my junior years. When, rather late in my career, I did eventually meet Roger his iconic reputation, extraordinary work ethic and intelligence were on full display, but what I found, rather to my surprise, was a kind man who cared for his patients with an inspirational passion. Patients with liver disease can sometimes be hard to love but Roger recognised the humans behind the disease and his desire to support all those stricken by liver disorders was always on display. As we redesigned services to provide easy access to treatment for people with addiction disorders and hepatitis C, Roger was an enthusiastic advocate and provided much needed support. His commitment to equality and high quality services for all was on full display in the Lancet commission and it is impossible to think of anyone else who could have united British hepatology around a common position and advocated so strongly for change. We will all miss his astute interventions and firm opinions but most of all I will miss his humour and his sense of fun – he lived life to the full and made sure that all around him were empowered to do the same.

Professor Graham Foster

I was so sorry to read about the sad news. Our thoughts and prayers are with Stephanie and the family.

Roger was a great friend to my father, who had enormous admiration for him, and his incredible work. It gave my parents great pride to be able to support Roger and his amazing life-saving research. It is a sad loss to the medical community, but I have no doubt he leaves a lasting monumental legacy.

Eddie Lawson

Professor Roger Williams was an extraordinary achiever and although George Best makes good copy it should not be allowed to obscure the fact that Roger (there was only one Roger) was for the medical profession and his patients a legend in his own lifetime. He arrived at Kings College Hospital without even an office. He commandeered a cupboard and set out with a single mindedness which may have cost him friends but established a liver unit that became world-renowned. Sadly, although being the only British subject to receive the distinguished achievement award of the American Association for the study of liver disease, he was not recognised in his own country by receiving a knighthood which he richly deserved. Great clinicians rarely get them nowadays.

Dr Anthony du Vivier

It has been my privilege to call Roger a friend and colleague. I spoke to him last about a month ago since I was very keen that he be affiliated with the Mayo Clinic London in some capacity. To all of us here he was a legend.

I was shocked to hear about his passing. Please accept my heartfelt sympathies. May the many warm memories you have help you get through this difficult time.

Patrick Kamath



George Best's sister Barbara McNarry at a function with the late Roger Williams and Sir Alex Ferguson

## Belfast Telegraph

Best family in tribute to 'splendid man' who helped George during alcoholism battle

The family of footballing icon George Best have paid tribute to the surgeon who treated him during his battle with alcoholism, describing Professor Roger Williams as "a splendid man".

The distinguished liver specialist passed away on July 26 at the age of 88.

Professor Roger Williams CBE had been a member of the pioneering team that carried out the world's first liver transplant at Addenbrooke's Hospital in England in 1968.

Speaking to the Belfast Telegraph, George's sister Barbara and her husband Norman described the incredibly close bond the whole family formed with Mr Williams, particularly during the latter days of the Manchester United star's life in 2005.

"Roger was a very special person," they said.

"We remember very clearly that day in 2005 when he brought us into the small family room at the Cromwell Hospital and broke the news to us that unfortunately things were not going as planned and were going to take their course.

In the middle of it he choked up and started to cry.

For a man who was described to us afterwards as a man of steel to allow himself to form such a close relationship with a patient, that was a real shock.

The relationship he had by that stage with George, it showed in that moment.

We always had an immense respect for him, however whenever we got there and spoke, we then had affection for him.

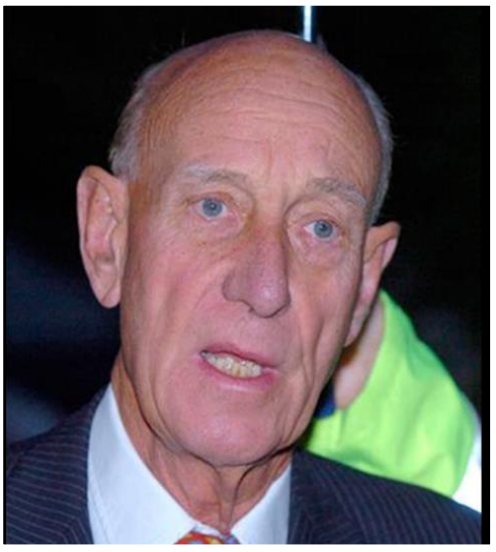
Roger took us under his wing as a family and he kept us in the picture as things were going forward.

He was professional to the core but it will always be something that will stick with us very much that during that conversation in the family room.

On the day of the funeral he was one of the few people who we welcomed into the family home.

We said to ourselves that the only people who will be allowed in the house were people who were with George whenever he passed away. Roger was one of those people.

For us we are just so sad that Roger has passed away. He was a splendid man."



## Roger Williams Obituary – Belfast Telegraph

Surgeon who carried out George Best transplant dies aged 88

The surgeon who treated Northern Ireland football legend George Best during his battle with alcoholism has died at the age of 88.

Professor Roger Williams CBE had been a member of the pioneering team that carried out the world's first liver transplant at Addenbrooke's Hospital in England in 1968.

His skills as one of the UK's most distinguished liver specialists were later brought to bear on the Belfast-born star, whose troubled relationship with booze was ultimately to cost him his life.

An obituary in The Times newspaper traced the distinguished surgeon's relationship with the mercurial former Manchester United player.

"Despite never having seen Best perform on the field, he and Best became close, with the tall, slim and well-spoken Williams becoming the compassionate face describing for the cameras the slow demise of Britain's (sic) first soccer superstar.

In 2002 he gave the footballer a lifesaving liver transplant at the Cromwell Hospital, waiving his fees for the bankrupt player, but the benefits were short-lived."

"We tried very hard with George and he did very well," Williams later explained, but he admitted that Best had not always followed his advice.

In 1966 the surgeon established the Institute of Liver Studies at King's Hospital in London.

He formally retired in 1996, but later set up a new liver disease institute at University College, also in London.

Two years later he initiated the first programme of adult-to-adult living donor liver transplantation in the country.

Roger Stanley Williams was born in Southampton, Hampshire, in 1931.

He was the only child of Stanley Williams, an estate agent, and his wife Doris (nee Clatworthy), who ran a sailmakers in nearby Hamble.

Professor Williams is survived by his widow Stephanie and three adult children.

We are all saddened by this news but take comfort from the fact that his passing was swift and did not prolong the agony, and that he had as full a life and as long a life as any of us could hope for. I only really got to be well acquainted with him since I returned to live in the UK in April 2018 and began attending the Institute of Hepatology Seminars in person. Tricia and I bumped into Roger, so to speak, at the opera in Vienna, and at the coagulopathy meeting in Groningen last year and we had the joy and pleasure of being his guests at the Athenaeum club last year too.

Most of all, however, I recall with pleasure and some embarrassment how he welcomed me when I first attended a Tuesday seminar at Kings, and included me thereafter in activities and at lunch, and we have the opportunity to have one on one chat on several occasions. I was also honoured to have the opportunity to edit two of the essays of which he was a co-author, one of which was with Rajiv Jalan and the other with Will Bernal, in the series on the History of Hepatology in the online AASLD Journal Clinical Liver Disease, for which I am the series editor.

Even though my close relationship with him has been so recent, I will truly miss him and his wisdom and I will continue to applaud and revel in his contributions to Hepatology, not only in this country but worldwide. I have a very close relationship with several of his ex-fellows, including Will Lee in Dallas and Laurie Blendis, who now lives full time in Jerusalem.

Adrian Reuben MBBS, FRCP, FACG, FAASLD, AGAF  
Professor Emeritus

I am so sad, I was looking forward to meeting him again after this emergency period. Many condolences go to his friends and collaborators...

Luca Valenti

I am forever grateful to Professor Roger Williams for his help in my professional career as an academic hepatologist. To me, he will always be remembered with his untiring lovely smile with a relentless passion to modernize the practice of hepatology with science and humanity. For unknown reason, I gave Professor Williams a call a few days before he passed away, not knowing he was in the intensive care unit. He said: "This is terrible and I am getting out of this!" This is the kind of spirit of Roger. He is also the only person who can enjoy sunshine by the pool with his tie on - a way to bring formality to nature!!



Climbing up the great wall of China in 1996 - initiate our joint venture to help to develop Hepatology in China!



Wearing a tie and enjoying the sunshine with his busy schedule!

George LAU, Hong Kong



The King and Queen of Liver Disease – Roger Williams & Sheila Sherlock

I am honoured to have worked with Roger – although we challenged one another several times it was always with respect and with the ultimate aim of improving patient care. Along with Sheila Sherlock, Roy Calne and others Roger transformed liver treatment and care in the UK and there are thousands alive today that have benefitted from this. Through his work Roger has left an amazing legacy that will greatly support those affected by liver disease for so many in years to come.

Andrew Langford  
Ex CEO of the British Liver Trust

In 1990, as a medical student at University College Dublin, I became aware of King's Liver Unit for the first time. Dr John Hegarty waxed lyrical about his time at King's and talked about the legendary care given to patients with liver disease. In my first week as a Senior House Officer, subsequently working with Prof Ciaran McCarthy (a former houseman of RW, during his time working with Sheila Sherlock) at University College Galway, the names O'Grady and Williams and King's College Hospital resurfaced. In 1995, reading a paper in the *New England Journal of Medicine* on the treatment of Autoimmune Hepatitis, could I have predicted that I would subsequently develop a love affair with the condition, share an office with one of the authors (Ian McFarlane), and then ultimately make some space available in the same office for Prof Roger Williams on his return to King's College Hospital in 2016. My own arrival to King's College Hospital was in 1997, after Roger had left but even then, his influence on the place remained. The pursuit of excellence, the ability to do something different and the ethos that he espoused was ingrained in the place. I decided that this was the kind of place that I wanted to work in.

I have been fortunate not only to interact with Roger in a professional capacity but also to consider him a great friend. A strategist of the highest calibre, a thinker, an investigator, a clinician who forgot more about the care of liver patients than many of us will ever learn. A man like him cannot be replicated. His name will forever be linked with King's College Hospital. Whilst he hid his warmth and enormous capacity for compassion behind his characteristic bark, I never failed to be surprised both in relation to his empathy and his willingness to help where problems existed. I miss the sporadic telephone calls at often the most inconvenient times. In the words of Shakespeare, "He was a man, take him for all in all, I shall not look upon his like again".

Michael A Heneghan, MD, MMedSc, FRCPI.  
Consultant Hepatologist & Professor of Hepatology,  
Institute of Liver Studies, King's College Hospital.  
(Former Director of King's Liver Unit 2012-2019)

## **British Liver Trust (BLT) A tribute to Professor Roger Williams CBE**

*Professor Steve Ryder, chair of the British Liver Trust medical advisory group, shares a tribute to Professor Roger Williams, who sadly passed away on Sunday 26th July. He was renowned for his service and contributions to the hepatology field throughout his career.*

All of us at the British Liver Trust were sad to hear about the death of Professor Roger Williams at the weekend.

Roger was a towering figure in British and indeed global hepatology.

He trained in hepatology with Dame Sheila Sherlock at the Royal Free Hospital and after a year as a consultant in Southampton moved to King's College Hospital in London.

At King's College Hospital, he set up a particular model of liver care which formed the basis of many liver units worldwide. This was an integrated model with its own critical care, pathology and clinical services which had research as an integral part of care delivery.

He was a key pioneer of liver transplantation providing the medical input and working with Professor Roy Calne in Cambridge to perform the first liver transplants in the UK at Kings in 1968.

He published many of the key papers advancing care in liver disease over more than 40 years with more than 3000 publications overall. After leaving Kings in 1996 he established a new liver disease Institute at University College London and in 2016 moved back to Kings to open his third liver Institute, a unique achievement. He was appointed CBE in 1993 for services to medicine.

Over the last few years, Roger had founded the Lancet commission on liver disease with Richard Horton as editor of the Lancet. The British Liver Trust worked closely with him over that time period where his drive and ambition to improve services for people suffering from liver disease was a vital factor in the success of the Lancet commission. It achieved a high public and professional profile for liver disease in the UK.

We will miss him and remember his huge positive impact on improving the lives for liver patients. Our thoughts go to his wife Stephanie and his children.



It is a huge honour to contribute to Prof's 'Liber Amicorum'. I first worked for him nearly 30 years ago, as one of the very last of a long series of his clinical fellows at Kings. On arrival I was in such awe of his reputation, and filled with such trepidation that in the Wednesday afternoon unit teaching sessions I actually removed my name badge and hid behind the largest member of the department, so as not to be selected to publicly discuss the cases presented – which as I recall was often a deeply jaundiced neonate of consanguineous parentage and way outside my 'comfort zone'. Fortunately, I was often unsuccessful in my avoidance strategies, and the education that I consequently received was – as for many, many in the field – second to none. At this early stage, and indeed throughout my training and senior career, I was truly lucky to be the recipient of his exceptional wisdom, kindness and generosity, and though we may have had very different political views, to count him as a good and valued friend. He has been a constant in my life and I will – and already do - miss him enormously and in very many ways. However, his influence on me personally pales into insignificance against the huge impact he has had upon improving the lives of people with liver disease across the world. A true giant of Hepatology, the research he led has quite literally defined the field. It is a recurrent theme that whenever I believe that I have had a new and original thought about novel areas of care and research, I find in my preparation that Prof identified this and explored it decades before! He has trained generations of Hepatologists who now as senior clinicians across the world have saved or improved care of many thousands of people with liver disease. We shall not see his like again, and the world is a far poorer place for his departure.

Professor William Bernal

The 'Prof' was such a 'force' in his field and will be a great loss to so many. I always enjoyed my telephone chats with him. He always made me laugh – and was indeed almost 'humble' about all his achievements within his field.

Mrs Anne Yusof



*Remembering Prof (As I always called him, despite having worked for him for almost 20 years.)*

*He was a true inspiration – I will always remember his drive, energy, passion, motivation, determination and work ethic, which I think has rubbed off all of those who has worked with him. What a momentous career and remarkable contribution to Hepatology worldwide – no longer a Cinderella specialty as it was when he first started out over 60 years ago. It was nice to see his efforts were recognised by the American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases (AASLD) in 2013 and just recently by the European Association for the Study of the Liver (EASL), along with his work on the Lancet Commission into Liver Disease in the UK. He leaves a wonderful legacy, which has been such a part of his life – he will never be forgotten!*

*My heartfelt condolences and love to Stephanie and his children who will no doubt miss him the most.*

*Enda O'Sullivan*

## Re: EASL Acceptance Speech for Award Ceremony, August 2020

*Dictated 24th June 2020 by Professor Roger Williams*

**Available at:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mYq25SwUK2E>

“The Distinguished Service Award is a great honour to have and I am deeply appreciative of the Governing Board of EASL in selecting me for it this year. It is also an acknowledgement of all the people who have helped me in research or clinical studies over the years in Institute’s at King’s and UCL.

In fact much of my life has revolved around EASL, starting with being the one English person invited by Professor Adolphe Martini in 1966 to an exploratory meeting at Marburg, with his vision of bringing together various groups in Europe that were interested but working separately in the specialty, as it was then. As well as serving for an interminable period on the Scientific Committee, I was Chairman of a meeting in Southampton in 1983 and later on, Honorary President of the Annual Meeting in Milan 2008 but compiling the History of EASL, bringing together all those who contributed to its work in the early days, was one of the greatest pleasures for me. Published in 2010, it was entitled “EASL: Past and Present” and my preface was headed ‘An Inspired Concept’ with the first chapter From Small Beginnings. A happy more recent occasion was being asked to participate in the Summer School of Young Investigators in 2015, with the instruction to give an encouraging talk on my life to the young researchers present.

The extraordinary decisions that were taken in Marburg have stood the test of time. Despite an amazing furore over the different decisions, EASL was set up as a society focused on young people in research. It was open to all; no membership fee, no subscription and with the programme for the annual meeting determined by members of the Scientific Committee whose age was limited to less than 40 years. It was subsequently raised a little! It did truly bring together the separate groups in Germany, France and Italy.

Now the International Liver Congress is the top meeting in the liver world and I believe that with the spread of activities of EASL both in the educational area, in research support and in the political arena, it has surpassed AASLD despite the 20 year start AASLD had. That it will continue to develop, I have no doubt. Tall oaks from little acorns grow and the current roots of EASL will ensure its continued top-flight influence in the whole area of our specialty.

Sadly, Covid-19 has prevented our usual net-working events and the latest presentations, but I know that much effort has gone into making this virtual meeting a worthwhile event.

Thank you again, EASL, for bringing hepatology to the forefront of specialities and I hope I will be able to continue to serve all its efforts, at least a little longer”.





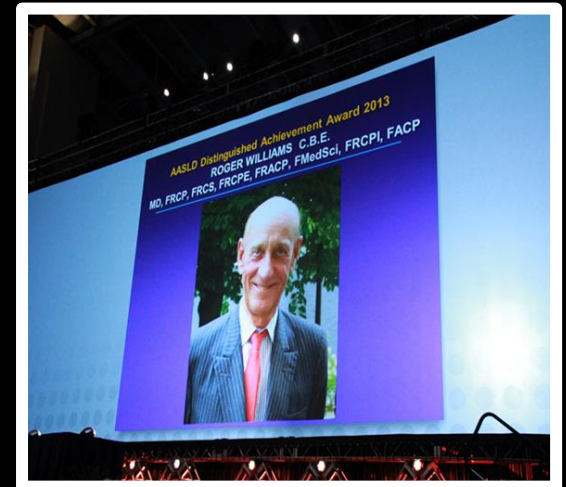
Roger Williams' passing offers a chance to reflect on his incredible career and his impact on hepatology outside of Europe and the UK. I came to Kings in 1973 as one of the first, but not the very first, North American Fellows. The Unit at the time had more than 30 Fellows from all over the world and was the most vibrant research unit I had even seen. And it had just been expanded before I got there, thanks to a gift from a Dallas Texas family, whose father, John O'Boyle, had been one of Roger and Roy Calne's first transplant patients in 1969. Despite the patient's short survival, Roger maintained his friendship with the Texas O'Boyle family over 50 years, right up until the end.

Professor William's many achievements were possible because of the warm support of his family but also because of his incredible energy and determination to succeed, his warm embrace of all who sought to work under his tutelage and his never-ending drive to inquire, imagine and achieve. In addition, more than 300 Fellows from the Kings era call themselves 'Kings Old Boys' and are part of Roger's extended family, testifying to the range of his experience and the reach of those around the world whose lives he has touched as teacher, mentor and physician. Roger's life lesson to all of us has been his boundless energy and enthusiasm for work, his passion for setting and achieving tough goals and his genuine interest in his fellow human beings. He always enjoyed work (and play) tremendously and that rubbed off on all of us, the Aussies like Bill Reed, the North Americans like Bob Bailey, Vince Bain and Don Jensen, and others too numerous to mention. We, in turn, spread our enthusiasm for hepatology literally around the world.

Professor Williams collected awards and honors like a magnet, but when he received the Distinguished Achievement Award in 2013 from the AASLD, I think he was truly moved. In presenting the award to him, I dubbed him 'the world's first transplant hepatologist,' in recognition of his close work with the Cambridge transplant team and Sir Roy Calne. Indeed, he was the first clinician to advocate and care for liver transplant patients, and shared that excitement with all of us, in those very early transplant days.

In sum, the most important attribute we all recall was the sheer joy and excitement Roger imparted to us about caring for liver patients and the search for new knowledge. That spirit, always delivered with a twinkle in the eye, was truly contagious and guides so many of us across the continents, each and every day, today and always.

William M. Lee, MD  
Dallas, Texas, USA



## Address on occasion of King's Reunion at AASLD 2013

Available at: <https://youtu.be/Lcc8cbkNlw4>

I imagine you may be expecting to hear a few words from me on this very special King's Reunion – whether you are or not, you are going to have them!

Firstly, a great thank you to Will Lee for organising the very super get together. Usually we meet along with Don Jensen, Bob Bailey, and Bill Reed for a happy evening dining together during AASLD but tonight is another order of magnitude. We certainly have been very well fed and watered – speaking metaphorically because the wine is truly super. A special welcome too, to long-term friends, Paul Berk and Willis Maddrey whose friendship I have greatly enjoyed over the years.

It is especially happy for me too that Stephanie has come to give support at the award ceremony on Monday as has my doctor daughter, Debbie, prised away from her Unit looking after the AIDS patients in Brighton. But then she does need to know about HIV/Hepatitis virus co-infection, so it will not be a waste of time for her!

Perhaps I should not be surprised at finding so many Old Fellows attending the AASLD. Sheila Sherlock wrote in the foreword to that special supplement which GUT published on the occasion of the Liver Unit's 25th Jubilee celebration in 1991, I quote: "The Liver Unit has created Ambassadors of Hepatology who are now consultants in all continents and King's should rejoice in this world-wide freemasonry".

The Distinguished Achievement Award of 2013 which I shall so proudly be receiving on Monday morning is recognition of many people's hard work and efforts over the years at King's and subsequently. There were so many firsts when we started out at King's – persevering with liver transplants in the 1970's when all others except Tom Starzl had given up the

struggle. The pioneering surgical skills of Sir Roy Calne never failed to inspire and then there was the famous, or infamous, Cambridge / King's rota which I know you all appreciated but only after coming off it, and so much learnt and documented about the natural history of chronic liver disorders. The names of those early transplant recipients whose courage we so much admired will forever be etched on my soul – John Jago, Elworthy, Winnie Smith, John O'Boyle, Bridewell, who you will be pleased to know is still alive and well at 37 years.

There were so many other successes too with seminal papers on acute liver failure, the first trials of liver support devices, including the novel application of charcoal haemoperfusion, the first designated ITU for acute liver failure to which so many desperately ill patients owe their survival. Adrian Eddlestone was at the forefront of burgeoning knowledge in auto-immune reactions and we learnt of cytotoxic T-cells, the role of B cells and my favourite the NK cells, now coming into their own again. The controlled trial of endoscopic variceal sclerotherapy with John Dawson was another first, with continuing work on spleen blood flow in portal hypertension driven through my long-term friendship and affection for the famous Egyptian singer, Halim Hafez, whose death was mourned by so many. Computer diagnosis of jaundice with Robin Knill Jones, our multi-disciplinary team-working, were all firsts – they were indeed heady days.

When I started at King's there was hardly a day when I went into the consultants' dining room for lunch and didn't find on the notice board the name of yet another liver patient who had died. It is very different now and we can all be proud of the extraordinary advances of Hepatology. It has come of age though that is a word I am trying to keep away from these days!

According to the Etruscans the liver was the seat of the soul and I would ask you to raise your glass in a toast to Hepatology at King's.

Hannover, 4 September 2020

To the family of Professor Roger Williams and the whole hepatology community around the world!

I have known Roger Williams since September 1977 when I was attending for the first time the Annual Meeting of the European Association for the Study of the Liver (EASL) in Padua, Italy. With Roger Williams we lose one of our most prominent colleagues. I admired Roger Williams as an outstanding clinician and scientist as well as a personal friend. Nowadays, enormous efforts are undertaken to stimulate young academics to develop careers as clinician scientists which means gaining expertise in both basic and clinical research on top of being trained in patient care. Roger Williams paved the way for this profession. His research was always patient-related and patient-oriented. He and his group made so many significant contributions to hepatology. I am hesitating to name some of them because it will never be complete. He and his group at King's College School of Medicine and later at the Institute of Hepatology at University College London (UCL) contributed to the whole field of hepatology including autoimmune liver diseases, viral hepatitis, liver transplantation, liver cancer, portal hypertension and other complications of liver cirrhosis, acute liver failure, acute-on-chronic-liver-failure, artificial liver support and more. Nothing was left out nor neglected.

Over the years Roger had attracted the most talented and brilliant young clinicians and scientists from all over the world to work with him. Subsequently, many of them became leaders themselves. Although I have never worked with Roger, I always recognized him as a mentor. Roger Williams was always very active and full of energy. He established and developed the King's College Liver Unit to become world renowned. It has been a privilege for me to attend and contribute to the 50th anniversary of the King's Liver Unit in 2016. I also enjoyed several times being a member of the scientific advisory board at his Institute of Hepatology which he founded and successfully developed further after his official retirement from King's. I also felt very privileged to give one of the Roy-Calne-Roger-Williams State-of-the-Art Lectures of the British Association for the Study of the Liver (BASL) with Roger in the room. Certainly, Roger was a charismatic person inspiring numerous young clinicians and scientists, not only those working with him.

Over the years I also became aware that Roger is a very talented clinician respected all over the world. When attending international meetings together with Roger people tried to get access to him to get his advice and profit from his expertise. With Roger Williams we lose a great pioneer in the field of Hepatology, a strong personality and a leader in the field as a clinician and scientist. At this year's first Digital EASL International Liver Congress (DILC) the world witnessed the respect that colleagues from around the globe pay to his personality and life-time achievements. I was very impressed and touched when under the leadership of Rajiv Jalan the EASL Achievement Award 2020 was given posthumously to Professor Roger Williams.

We are thankful for everything he contributed, and we will always remember him. R. I. P. Roger

Condolences to his family, in particular Stephanie, and his children.

Professor Michael Manns, M.D.  
President, Hannover Medical School, Germany



## BSG Obituary: Professor Roger Williams CBE

In Memoriam: Professor Roger Williams CBE FRCS FRCP FRCPE FRACP FMedSci (1931- 2020)

### The story of 3-Institutes'



From the early days of his clinical training, Prof Williams knew he wanted to be a Hepatologist and followed his passion to better understand liver disease and find cures for it from the day he started to the very last days of his life, 25th July 2020. During this time, he has published over 2000 papers and has a H-Index of over 130. After graduating from Royal London in 1953, his first exposure to Hepatology was working with the late Dame Sheila Sherlock (1959), an experience, which inspired him to become a Hepatologist. He travelled to work in Columbia in 1961 where he studied approaches to quantitate liver function tests and learned to perform liver vein catheterisation. He returned to the Royal Free in 1963 where he published important papers on tropical splenomegaly which took him to Africa. He finally moved to Kings College in 1965, where he performed the bulk of the work that he is currently recognised for.

### King's College (1965-1996)

Such was his resolve and self-belief that within 4-years of starting a new Consultant post, Prof Williams started to hold the centre ground in Hepatology, coordinating the first liver transplant in collaboration Sir Roy Calne in 1968 against much opposition from his peers. This provided the framework for building the largest, the most respected and productive liver unit in the world, which has led the field for the past 55 years; such is his legacy. The work done by his group became the reference standard for other units around the world attracting the best in the field to Kings College. In addition to many firsts in liver transplantation, he was the first to describe recurrence of autoimmune diseases such as primary biliary cirrhosis and autoimmune hepatitis in the graft and the first to describe experience with use of Tacrolimus to reverse chronic rejection.

His seminal observations at Kings are innumerable but in my view the most important amongst them was the recognition that liver failure was a multisystem disease and required a multidisciplinary team to address its complexities. He used this knowledge and understanding to set up the first liver intensive care unit, which provided the training ground for many many Hepatologists in the world. He was the first to demonstrate that severe coma in patients with acute liver failure was reversible, an observation that created the rationale for transplanting comatose patients with acute liver failure. A huge contribution of this unit was to accurately characterise the syndrome, which led to the development of poor prognostic criteria, that is still used world-wide to allocate organs for liver transplantation. His group developed novel management strategies for acute liver failure including the use of mannitol, N-acetylcysteine, renal replacement therapy and most importantly liver transplantation. His pioneering work extended to cirrhosis; amongst others they described the Child-Pugh score and established sclerotherapy and banding for varices.

The Kings Liver Course was held annually attracting both young and older Hepatologists to Kings. It was at such a course in 1991 that I first met Prof Williams and was immediately inspired by the beauty of Hepatology as a subject, the deep understanding of pathobiology needed to solve the disease, the rapid advancement in our understanding and the massive opportunity to make a difference. It was at the end of this course that I decided to become a Hepatologist.

### ***University College London (UCL) (1996-2010)***

Most people hang up their shoes in the pursuit of leisure when they retire. Not Prof Williams. As he retired from Kings College, he moved to UCL to set up the Institute of Hepatology together with Prof Naoumov and Prof Vergani, where I had the enormous privilege of working with him for about 11 years. Starting from scratch at UCL, he built one of the most amazing Liver units, where the focus of activity was completely different to his work at Kings as he did not have access to Liver Transplantation, which was centred at the Royal Free. There was far more emphasis on Innovation and Translational research focussing on autoimmune liver disease, viral hepatitis, hepatocellular carcinoma and he recruited me from Edinburgh to build a liver failure group in 2000. Together, we first defined the existence of acute on chronic liver failure, discovered a novel therapy for hepatic encephalopathy (ornithine phenylacetate), which is entering a Phase 3 clinical trial, a liver dialysis device (DIALIVE), which has just finished a proof of concept study in patients, a toll-like receptor antagonist, which as due to start a Phase 2 study and a novel engineered carbon carbon (CARBALIVE), which has also finished a proof of concept study. Disagreements over the future between the Institute and UCL led him to leave UCL in 2010. He was now 78 years old. I decided to stay on with UCL.

### ***Institute of Hepatology, Kings College Hospital (2016 – Date)***

His tenacity and quest for knowledge took him back to Kings, where he built the 3rd independent research Institute and this time his focus was on high-quality basic science research. He was able to convince Dr Shilpa Chokshi to move with him as the Chief Scientist and together they built unrivalled facilities for basic science research focussing on liver immunology, the microbiome, liver regeneration, cirrhosis and liver cancer. The model was to collaborate closely with clinical environments but excel in extremely high-quality basic science, an unmet need in Hepatology. Perhaps, his most important contribution over the past 7-years has been to lead the development the Lancet Commission, which brings together all the major stakeholders in UK Hepatology to try and define how to improve the care of patients across the country.

### ***Prof Roger Williams, the man...***

In addition to his love for Hepatology, he was a keen tennis player but more recently, it has been sailing his 35ft yacht competitively. He has received innumerable awards in his professional career, including the EASL recognition award he was due to receive this year; he was most proud of The Satanita Trophy, which was presented to the best performing boat, namely his – Jos of Hamble, in the Members' Regatta of the Royal Yacht Squadron, that he received last year. Sailing was his true passion.

Professor Williams lived with his wife, Stephanie, a phenomenal lawyer. He had 7 surviving children, but sadly one died aged 37. The tradition of Medicine in his family continues as one of his daughters is a Consultant Physician in HIV and he also has a grandchild now in a career in A&E.

His big vision for Hepatology, curiosity, leadership, booming voice and critical questioning will be missed by us all.

Author: Rajiv Jalan

*I will always feel fortunate for having had the opportunity, though short, to experience the guidance and inspiration of The Prof. He created a unique Institute based on his appreciation of the synergy that is possible between clinician and scientist. I admire him for that abnormally far-sighted approach to tackling the liver disease challenges of today, and of the future. He will be missed yet I know that his ethos will persist to benefit future generations.*

Dr Neil Youngson

No one can replace him. We all feel very sad and I just can't believe it. His intelligence in the area will be missed by the world.

In Auckland we all are speechless.

Dr Debi Prasad

# British Society of Gastroenterology (BSG)

## In Memoriam: Professor Roger Williams CBE

The BSG was saddened to hear of the death of Prof Roger Williams on Sunday, 26th July. Roger Williams was a long-time member of the Society and was hugely important in the shaping and development of Hepatology in Britain, through a long and illustrious career.

He saw the importance of liver transplantation very early in its development and as a result the need to establish a national program within the UK. His research and academic interests were so diverse that virtually every field of hepatology benefited from his vision and drive for excellence. Where others saw barriers, Roger would see opportunities on which he focused all his formidable intellect and determination.

The lives of many patients with liver disease were greatly improved by his work. A huge cohort of hepatology trainees were influenced and inspired by his leadership and went on to develop the specialty here and across the world. He remained an active and passionate advocate for improvement in the care of patients with liver disease to the end of his life, most recently through the Lancet Commission.

Our thoughts are with his family and friends, to whom we send our sincere condolences at this time of loss.

Fear death? — to feel the fog in my throat,

The mist in my face,

When the snows begin, and the blasts denote

I am nearing the place,...

For the journey is done and the summit attained,

And the barriers fall,...

I was ever a fighter, so—one fight more,

The best and the last!

**From Prospice, by Robert Browning**

Author: Dr Alastair McKinlay

*My Dear Roger*

I was totally unprepared to learn of you leaving us. I still feel your presence in my everyday life, thinking of you and remembering the glorious days of the "Liver Unit" that you built from scratch with determination and enthusiasm, both of which were features that accompanied you throughout your life.

You profoundly shaped my professional career as I am sure that of hundreds of hepatologists worldwide. As my mentor and friend, you really influenced my entire life and all my choices. Many would look back at this point and take stock. No doubt I'd do it all again without remorse. I really owe this to you: you never looked back, always ready to start a new adventure. The new Institute at King's testifies to your immense strength and innate optimism, virtues common to the greatest clinical scientists, entrepreneurs and visionaries.

I really treasure all the wonderful moments I had with you. The day I said I had an academic opportunity in infectious diseases you grunted: "Ah c'mon Mario you want to be a liver doctor!". And all the fantastic Saturday morning rounds, where we all learned a lot, picking on "Dr Mondeal have a feel at that spleen"!

I was privileged and proud to be part of your many disciples. I am also delighted for having visited you at the Institute in early February. It was a wonderful occasion to see Stephanie and you, thinking back to the time you organized one of the most exciting, old style and authentic EASL meetings of all times in Southampton! Those are the memories I shall treasure most.

Thank you for all you did for me.

Mario Mondelli



Roger generously hosted a festschrift to mark my departure from King's last November, an occasion we both enjoyed immensely. We reminisced on 37 years during which our relationship navigated its way from master and mentor to friendship. We celebrated academic achievement as well as reflecting on themes that had refused to progress despite much passion and application (liver support devices for one). Precious moments! I am deliberately avoiding adjectives to describe Roger because so many apply. His impact for me is best reflected by the imagery of the giant oak in the forest. Thank you, Roger.

John O'Grady

*I am very sorry about Prof Williams' death, what he achieved and did will remain inside of all of us. He was an elegant and refined guide.*

Marco Agostini



## A Selection of Twitter Tributes

<https://twitter.com/drgautammehta/timelines/1300772843265970176>

**Conservative Health** We are sad to announce the death of our Chairman of many years, Roger Williams. He was an active supporter of the Party and passionate advocate for the prevention of liver disease to the end of his life. Our thoughts are with his family and friends.

**Tony Hockley** Very sad to hear we've lost Roger Williams. Hugely influential in getting ministers to act on alcohol harms, & generally valuable sounding board on health policy. Fair winds RW.

**Avi Zi** Professor Roger Williams, together with Dame Sheila Sherlock and my mentor Fenton Schaffner, were the most influential figures in my days as an Hepatology fellow at Mount Sinai NYC. R.I.P dear Professor.

**Matthew Armstrong** An absolute legend. Incredible enthusiasm, passion and dedication to liver disease for over 60 years! What he has achieved is mind blowing. He was one of a kind and will never be forgotten.

**Harry Rutter** Very sorry to hear Roger Williams has died. He was always a pleasure to work with on the Lancet Liver Commission he led, and it was wonderfully entertaining to see him in action, a true force of nature well into his 80s. Farewell Roger, you'll be much missed.

**IAS** And the public health world was saddened to learn of the passing of professor Roger Williams, whose influence in the field of hepatology is unparalleled and will be sorely missed.

**Palak Trivedi** Very sad to here this. A true pioneer. Massive loss for the liver community ....

**CLDF** Everyone at CLDF is saddened this week to hear of the death of Professor Roger Williams. Prof Williams dedicated his life to furthering the world's understanding of liver disorders. He was a great friend of the charity. Our love and thoughts are with his family and colleagues.

I had the privilege of working with Professor Williams over the past four years at the Institute of Hepatology at Denmark Hill, whilst as a Consultant Hepatologist in the Liver Unit at King's which he founded. During my clinical training, his leadership and driving force were evident in all of the clinical mentors I worked with (and continue to), several of whom he had directly trained. The legacy of the King's Liver Unit will forever remember his huge contributions to and dominance of the field of liver disease, and we collectively strive to continue to push the boundaries. The Lancet Commission which he set up remains a very significant achievement in positively challenging the inequalities patients with liver disease face in the UK.

He has been and continues to be a major influence in my academic and research career, appointing me as a Principal Investigator (to my great surprise) when I was still writing up my PhD. When I asked recently why he made this decision, he looked at me slightly bemused and then with that famous and cheeky smile responded 'it is not about who or where you are right now, it is because of where you are going and the things you will achieve'. He drove me to be better and bolder and to believe in myself and abilities, as well as always providing that unwavering support, encouragement and guidance when things got tough.

An important aspect I will miss about him was his unique perspective and understanding fostered over 6 decades of the importance of clinicians and scientists working together collaboratively, ensuring that clinically relevant challenges could then be investigated and successfully solved. This was to the benefit of the patient who always remained the focus of his career. This is best encapsulated in an article I found from 2008 where he wrote: 'Enabling clinicians to work alongside scientists with multidisciplinary skills in dedicated centres will continue to be the most effective way of enhancing knowledge and expertise in the specialty, a view from which I have never deviated.' This way of working was absolutely true to his very last day.

He is sorely missed by us all as a highly valued and unique mentor, colleague, friend and leader. Whilst we clearly feel a great sense of professional loss, I extend my sincere condolences to you for your very personal loss.

Vishal C Patel



Roger was a true legend in the field of Hepatology and was someone that I greatly admired, he will be very much missed by so many of us in the field.

Professor Derek Mann

"I feel incredibly grateful for having had the opportunity to get to know Roger and to work alongside himself. Indeed, I regard my regular interactions with him following the return of the Institute of Hepatology to King's in 2016 as one of the pinnacles of my academic career. His indefatigable drive, never-give-up personality, curiosity for both clinical and fundamental research, commitment to his patients, and last but not least, his sense of humour, were formidable and had to be witnessed to be believed. He will live with us in memory for evermore".

Alberto Sanchez-Fueyo  
King's College London





I joined Roger at the Liver Unit in King's as his Senior Registrar in 1968 and stayed for 6 years including spells in Brighton and California. It was a truly memorable experience. Roger was a splendid guide, mentor, supporter and friend and I owe so much to him for my subsequent career. I enjoyed every moment and am eternally grateful.

We stayed in close contact over the subsequent decades and we met regularly. He always amazed me with his inexhaustible energy, originality and inventiveness. His monumental achievements are well documented in the obituaries in the national press. He is irreplaceable and I will miss him greatly.

Dr Iain Murray-Lyon

Roger was a true friend to me for so many years. I feel privileged to have had a personal chat with him on the phone in the last month when he was in great form and working ceaselessly. This was his wish and we should all take comfort in that.

Dr John Karani

Roger was quite literally a towering figure in his field. He should have got a peerage let alone a knighthood. Nobody has dedicated more time to helping cure liver disease. He was a truly inspirational figure whom I shall miss terribly. We will all miss the irreplaceable Roger.

Mr Piers Pottinger

I first met Roger as a new graduate at the age of 22 in 1975 and we certainly had our ups and downs but I owe my whole professional career to him and for that I am very grateful. He was very supportive of me and will be remembered always with fondness and respect. Heather M Smith - his "little ugly duckling"!!

He may have left us physically but will live on in many peoples' memories I am certain.

Heather Smith



## A Selection of Twitter Tributes

<https://twitter.com/drgautammehta/timelines/1300772843265970176>

**Michael Heneghan** The passing of a giant. Roger Williams, The father of Transplant Hepatology and a founding Father of Hepatology. Fondly Missed.

**Professor Steve Ryder, chair of the British Liver Trust medical advisory group.** Roger was a towering figure in British and indeed global hepatology.'

**Alastair McKinlay** Very sad to hear of the death of Prof. Roger Williams. A hugely influential figure who helped to shape Hepatology here, but also around the world. The BSG sends sincere condolences to his family and to colleagues who worked with him.

**Dr Alastair McKinlay's tribute in the British Society of Gastroenterology (BSG)** noted not only that 'the lives of many patients with liver disease were greatly improved by his work', but also that Williams was an inspiration to 'a huge cohort of hepatology trainees' ensuring that his legacy will be felt across the world well beyond his death.

**Chokshi Lab London** A mentor never really dies, their passion and work live on through us. His legacy & commitment to liver disease must & will continue.

**Vijay Shah** Roger Williams. A giant of our Time. Rest In Peace.

**JM Pawlotsky** Very sad to learn that Prof. Roger Williams, one of the 'inventors' of Hepatology, passed away. A great man... Last time we met was 2 years ago in York, UK. Still full of energy and humor. I will miss him.

**Dame Jane Dacre** Very sorry to hear about the death of Prof Roger Williams. He was a great hepatologist and a wonderful character. We will miss him in medicine.

**Julian Walters** So sad to hear this. He started so many of us on our careers. He never lost that drive and determination for livering.

*Roger Williams was a long-standing friend and a wonderful individual who did so much for so many people.*

*He will be long remembered for his dedication to research into liver diseases and has saved the lives of many people. The Liver Foundation will be his legacy and long may it continue in his memory.*

*He is one of those few people that you can honestly say it was a privilege to have known him and to count him as a true friend.*

*Sir Anthony Jolliffe GBE, DL*

Roger Williams was a giant of his time in academic hepatology. Few people have had such impact and have influenced so many. One of the most telling ways of measuring the contribution of a leader is to look at their protégés, and what they have achieved. Trainees of Roger are now spread across the globe, and they are his most important legacy. It was a privilege to have worked with Roger, particularly during his "second coming" to King's.

The world is a poorer place now that he has left us.

Professor Sir Robert Lechler

*"It is not very often one comes across a true Legend during his lifetime. I regard myself as extremely fortunate to have made the acquaintance of Professor Roger Williams and I have always felt privileged to have known him. He was, after all, responsible for my and many others' career in Liver Medicine, Surgery and Transplantation. Our discussions were always inspiring and thought provoking. As all true Legends he never really left, his legacy makes him omnipresent."*

Andreas A Prachalias  
Clinical Director, King's College Hospital

My first reaction to hearing the sad news was to say 'I thought Professor Roger Williams CBE would go on for ever'.

My professional relationship with him started at Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge when I was the Senior Nurse on the Transplant Unit undertaking the Liver Transplantation which was a joint programme between Addenbrooke's and Kings College Hospital, London. Both he and Professor Sir Roy Calne were a formidable team. Their professional relationship became a true friendship.

I challenged Roger when he was Chairman of the then Conservative Medical Society to change the name to Conservative Health to be inclusive of other Healthcare Professionals in particular registered Nurses. He was impressive with his continual lobbying of the Health Ministers regarding alcoholism and liver disease - Rightly so. I have and continue to enjoy to be part of Conservative Health. His leadership will be a hard act to follow.

My lasting memory will be of the two day Liver Transplant Symposium at Trinity Hall the 16th and 17th July 1998 to celebrate the 50th Anniversary. The first day looked back on the 50 years with a superb recollection of how it all started by Professor Roger Williams CBE. The second day looked forward to the next 50 years with the first presentation by Professor Roger Williams CBE! It was an impressive lucid look at the future with Roger very much involved.

Sally Taber

"It would be hard to overstate your influence on health policy. You delivered on your determination to make a difference by combining hard evidence with great charm and extraordinary communication skills. The difference made has been substantial and will be lasting."

Tony Hockley, PhD  
Visiting Senior Fellow, LSE  
Former Special Adviser to the Secretary of State for Health

I recall my first conversation with Dr Williams, nearly forty years ago in November 1980. Adrian Eddleston had accepted my application to join him as a research fellow in immunology on the Liver Unit pending an interview with the head of department. Laura, my first daughter, decided to make an entry on the morning of the interview, not unexpectedly since childbirth after a certain point never is, but certainly not on any planned schedule. I rang the Liver Unit very early that morning to apologise for my failure to attend the interview and to my surprise went straight through to Dr Williams. I had expected some warm words of congratulation, but the message was very short and simple. If I really wanted to work on the unit I must visit as soon as possible. I took that advice and attended for an interview the following week (we only discussed sailing). I started on the unit a few months later and almost immediately found myself crewing on 'Jos' in the Hamble and then at Cowes week.

As with so many people who preceded or followed me with "Roger" as our mentor it was the point in a career when Hepatology became the only option. That first conversation made me realise the professional commitment that he expected of himself and his colleagues. That conversation also instilled a feeling that persisted over 40 years in all my contacts with Roger that I had never quite worked hard enough. I have never met anyone with such a strong work ethic, nor anyone so driven to continue to research into liver disease. Often a difficult character, with views he held strongly, he earned the respect of all of us in the field and I will remember him with both respect and affection that only increased over 40 years. One word sums him up: unique.

Graeme Alexander

# Professor Roger Williams

Hepatologist who played a vital role in Europe's first liver transplant and went on to treat George Best

**P**ROFESSOR ROGER WILLIAMS, who has died aged 88, was at the heart of international research into severe liver disease and its treatment for more than half a century; his profile was raised considerably in 2002 when his most famous patient, George Best, had a transplant following decades of alcoholism.

Williams, who was not a football fan, knew little about the Northern Irishman before he began treating him, but he soon succumbed to his charm.

"He never turned anything on," recalled Williams. "He was just natural and extraordinarily nice, and people liked him for that reason. He was an excellent patient. He did not always follow my advice but I never heard him complain once, however ill he was. With all the things I had to do for him, he would just say: 'OK, Doc.'"

Williams appealed to bar staff across the land not to serve Best, but the great footballer was unable to curb his appetite for booze, and died in 2005. It was a clearly emotional Williams who stood outside the hospital and announced that the end was near.

In 1968 Williams, working at King's College Hospital in London, had teamed up with Professor Roy Calne in Cambridge to develop a liver transplant programme; 40 years later there are 700 such procedures each year in England alone.

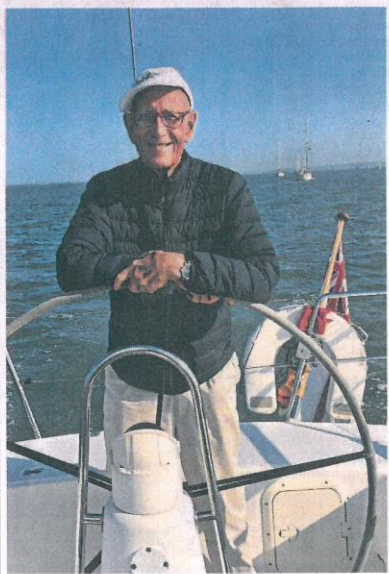
He established the King's unit as one of the best in the world, and it became a magnet for trainees from around the globe; many of the world's leading hepatologists passed through on their way to the medical ladder. Knowing that extra cash was vital to his mission – "I spend some time every day looking for fresh sources of income," he told a reporter in 1975 – Williams became an expert in seducing charities, philanthropists and captains of industry.

Roger Stanley Williams was born at Bexleyheath in south-east London on August 28 1931, but when he was young the family moved to Southampton, where his father, Stanley, worked as an engineer with Harland and Wolff.

Stanley had also spent a period working for a tin mine at Jos in Nigeria, and it was there that he had married Doris Clatworthy, the daughter of a master butcher in Kent.

Eventually the family owned a sail-making business in Hamble which was the first to introduce terylene sails. Young Roger was an only child, and had a happy time attending St Mary's College in the city, although he was not a Catholic.

He wanted to go into the Navy, but his formidable mother had other ideas; medicine was an acceptable alternative, and like many doctors he could trace his interest in the subject back to a childhood experience in hospital – in his case diphtheria at the



Williams, above, indulging in his principal passion outside medicine – sailing; he was also an opera buff and could sometimes be seen and heard combining his two enthusiasms, singing arias at the helm. He later bought a farm below, where he spent as much time as he could

age of 13. He had just turned 17 when he began his medical training at the London Hospital, where he qualified in 1953 at the age of 21.

Following junior appointments at the London he was called up for National Service, and was posted to the Queen Alexandra Military Hospital at Millbank on the Thames, where Roger Bannister was a contemporary.

The ambitious Williams was focused on a teaching hospital career and recognised the importance of research and publication. "Publish or perish" was his maxim, and he went on to produce a remarkable 2,500 papers.



When he came across a patient suffering from haemochromatosis – deposits of excess iron in the liver – his interest in liver disease was kindled, and he settled on the new speciality of hepatology as a career. At the time Sheila Sherlock was the doyenne of liver disease, but her training post at the Hammersmith Hospital was already filled, so Williams took a two-year post on the respiratory ward and completed research for an MD thesis on asbestosis.

Sheila Sherlock was appointed the first female Professor of Medicine at the Royal Free Hospital in north London and she invited Williams to join her there in 1959. Over the next six years he helped to establish the Royal Free as a centre of excellence for liver disease; in 1961 he went to New York on a Rockefeller Travelling Fellowship and worked with many of the leading experts in this new specialism.

Sheila Sherlock and Williams were both strong-willed and there was no room for two leaders at the Royal Free. They were always publicly polite to each other, but this belied a fierce rivalry, which did not abate when Williams set up his own unit in direct competition. "If I hadn't had the Royal Free to compete with, maybe King's wouldn't have been so good," he admitted.

After a spell in Southampton as a consultant physician, he returned to London determined to set up his own unit. He chose an offer from King's, and put together a multidisciplinary team in which general scientists, biochemists, physiologists, epidemiologists and bioengineers worked alongside doctors.

Joining forces with Roy Calne led to the first liver transplant in Europe, in 1968, and several more followed, Williams travelling up to Cambridge on an almost daily basis to provide medical support.

Preventing the body from rejecting the new organ was a sine qua non of transplantation, and Williams and his unit made particularly vital

contributions to this aspect of the work; for patients with reversible liver failure his unit developed the technique of charcoal haemoperfusion, which took over the liver's work until it had recovered.

In 1996, when Williams turned 65, his contract with King's came to an end so he moved to the new Institute of Hepatology at University College Hospital – largely funded by the Foundation for Liver Research which he had set up in 1973.

In 2010 he was on the move again, when UCL transferred its hepatology work to the Royal Free, then finally, in 2014, Williams was invited to establish a new Institute of Hepatology back at King's, which opened two years later.

He remained a practising NHS consultant until he was 83. A vice president of the Royal College of Physicians, in 2014 he began chairing a Lancet Standing Commission on liver disease in the UK which has greatly influenced policy and practice.

Williams was accorded numerous honours, including a CBE in 1993, and 20 years later he was the first non-US national to receive a Distinguished Achievement Award from the American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases.

Regularly working 12 hours a day, he was an opera enthusiast, but his first love outside medicine was sailing – all his boats were named *Jos of Hamble* in honour of his mother, who had bought him his first, "Jos" for where she had been married and "Hamble" for where she worked.

"The Prof", as he was known, was a successful inshore racer, latterly in a J105. The Solent was his stamping ground – he was occasionally to be seen and heard combining his passions for sailing and opera, singing his favourite arias at the helm – and for 50 years he rarely missed Cowes Week; he was a proud member of the Royal Yacht Squadron.

In later life he acquired a farm, near Salisbury, to which he devoted as much time as he could. He was also an enthusiastic tennis player, and was on court with his coach when he collapsed a few weeks before his death. Tall, elegant, and always immaculately dressed, Roger Williams was invariably polite and welcoming. He met his first wife, Lindsay Elliott, at medical school; they married in 1954, and had three daughters, one of whom predeceased him, and two sons.

They divorced, and in 1978 he married Stephanie de Laszlo, granddaughter of the society portrait painter Philip de Laszlo; they had two daughters and a son. At his 80th birthday party he began his speech: "For someone who does not particularly like children I seem to have acquired quite a lot of them."

Roger Williams, born August 28 1931, died July 26 2020

## Daily Telegraph - Obituary

So sad. He was a great man, and just about the last of a very eminent generation. We will all miss him.

Professor John G Williams

"Professor Williams (Roger) was an inspiration to me and I always appreciated that he took the time, despite his eminence, to listen to my wittering's and make me feel I was part of the broader discussion. Roger was a rare and remarkable intellect and man who will be sorely missed. Roger was a mentor to the whole Liver fraternity both clinical & research and the loss of his leadership and guidance will be acutely felt across the globe and I personally will miss him greatly."

Gavin Wright

It is with great sadness that I learned of Roger's passing who I have known for many years as an esteemed colleague and thought leader in the field of hepatology.

He was the leading figure in hepatology in the United Kingdom for many decades and also had an outstanding international profile, with wide-ranging achievements in original research, clinical translational research, clinical delivery, education and advocacy for liver disease.

There is no other individual who has demonstrated such a commitment and had such an impact on the field, and he will be greatly missed.

Lord Ara Darzi

I have worked with Professor Williams almost 20 years and have always seen him as this giant figure who was well-respected and even revered. I have always been amazed by his passion and dedication to the field of Hepatology. One thing I will always remember about him is his sharp but accurate comments of our draft manuscripts, which were legendary at the Institute and illustrate quite perfectly Prof's vast and unmatched knowledge in all things' hepatology. We will miss him dearly at the Institute. We will miss hearing his booming voice across the corridor and his sharp questions at journal club. It has been an honour and a privilege to have worked for him.

Rest in Peace Prof.

Sandra Phillips

It is indeed a huge personal loss for me. I have known Professor Roger Williams for over 30 years and have been in touch with him until a month before his death.

The first time I met him was as a liver transplant registrar at King's working under KC Tan and Nigel Heaton. I went to show him a manuscript that I had written on liver transplantation for Wilson's disease. The first thing that struck me was that even though I was an insignificant doctor in the unit at that time he received me with his wide-open eyes and engagingly big smile. He asked me to come back the next day and to my surprise he had the paper ready with a huge number of corrections and what followed shortly was my first ever publication from King's.

Roger was very happy for me to be appointed at King's as a consultant surgeon and my meeting with him before my interview was very encouraging. I was then a very young surgeon and an overseas candidate. He expressed his confidence in me by including me in his private practice in Cromwell hospital soon after my appointment. Professor Williams, Nigel Heaton, John Karani and I worked well together to build a highly successful liver transplant program in the private sector. I learnt an important lesson that success comes from good leadership and choosing the right people to work with.

I have learnt and imbibed so much from Roger over the years. He was an excellent hands-on clinician. I recall a particular incident where a middle eastern patient had a persistent biliary fistula for over 12 months following a gunshot injury and multiple abdominal operations. I wanted to operate on the patient, while Roger much to my displeasure did not allow me to. He simply wanted the drain removed. The decision seemed very strange to me at that time but it worked and the fistula dried up within days. After I returned to India he continued to refer patients to me for LDLT. He cared for his patients and was always easily accessible to them. There have been instances where he would have more updated information about his patients on my ward in India when he is enquiring about them.

Another aspect of Roger which I loved was his old-style ways of teaching and his interest in liver pathology. I developed an interest in Liver Pathology because of him and it amuses me to think how registrars and fellows used to hide when he was asking questions during the weekly Tuesday morning pathology meetings. Here I would like to acknowledge the contributions of late Prof Bernard Portmann, a legend in Liver Pathology. I have tried and replicated in India what I have seen and experienced in King's and I am aware that it will never be the same. I was lucky to have worked under Professor Williams and for the opportunity to learn Hepatology from him and I am thankful to God that he was able to visit our unit in Chennai a year ago during the MCLD meeting. He has been an inspiration for all of us, driving us to work hard. I am sure Professor Roger Williams will remain in our memories forever.

Mohamed Rela, Chennai, India

I first encountered Roger as a junior doctor when attending the Kings Liver Course in 1991 when I was grilled by him and Alex Mowatt, a formidable pairing of hepatology heavyweights, over a paediatric case I'd been sent to clerk and examine while everyone else had their lunch. I only survived this thanks to the parents who told me all I needed to know about Allagille's syndrome. Roger with his boundless knowledge, together with the obvious dedication and passion for advancing understanding and clinical care he inspired in the whole Kings Liver Unit team, had a profound impact on me. I immediately committed to pursuing a career in hepatology, returning to Kings as a research fellow, working with Roger, Nikolai Naoumov and Shilpa Chokshi, and ended up finishing the rest of my training there. Throughout my career Roger continued to be a powerful influence and a staunch ally - his indefatigable energy and relentless pursuit of progress regardless of obstacles proved an ideal role model for developing a new liver unit and research program in the face of NHS inertia and indifference. In recent years working with Roger on the Lancet Commission I remained in awe of his ability to chair and lead meetings with such authority despite being well into his 80's. As many others did, including perhaps Roger himself, I had somehow expected him to be around for ever so his death has been a shock and a great sorrow. Roger leaves a tremendous legacy - he has made an enormous contribution to the understanding of liver disease and the provision of best care for liver patients and has inspired several subsequent generations of hepatologists and scientists. I am part of a global cohort of former fellows and colleagues who are indebted to him and who will forever remember him.

Professor Matthew Cramp  
South West Liver Unit and Peninsula Medical School, Plymouth, UK

He was a historical figure in the world of hepatology, a warrior and a great motivator.

Giuseppe Mazza



Roger was a dear friend who I will miss greatly. He was a champion of higher standards in healthcare and lent special insights to the Conservative Party as we developed our policies in health when I was health secretary. He was also a warm and generous man which huge numbers of friends and admirers in parliament and beyond.

Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP

It has been a real honour to work with Professor Williams for nearly a decade.

I could admire over the years his forward-looking attitude and his innovative and brave contribution to medicine and science. Prof was determined and unstoppable. I remember a significant episode: it was a challenging moment in our project. I presented to Prof the 'negative' results that, in my opinion, would have justified to abandon the study. But not for him! For Prof, there was never a reason to give up. The difficulties of a novel idea to emerge would not have stopped him, and indeed sometime later, we could celebrate the recognition of our efforts. Thank you, Prof!

The unique passion and dedication to Hepatology and science of Professor Williams will always be an example to follow for many of us.

Elena Palma

I first met Professor Williams as a registrar in training at University College Hospital in 2006. I remember to this day his humour, professionalism and awesome knowledge in training me and my colleagues who are now Hepatology Consultants across the country. Professor Williams has inspired the current generation of Hepatologists and was a leading force as an advocate for patients with liver disease. I have been a consultant in Liver Medicine now for 9 years and much of my success and inspiration in pursuing a career in Hepatology can be attributed to Prof Williams tireless and unbounding enthusiasm and clinical skill. For 50 years he was at the forefront of knowledge with regard to all aspects of Liver disease and continued to supervise and examine a variety of immunological, scientific and clinical PhDs evaluating novel approaches to the management of patients with Liver disease in his role as the Director of the Institute of Hepatology at Kings College London. He led on the development of national strategies to combat the growing tide of liver cirrhosis on the influential Lancet Commission for Liver Disease.

It has been a privilege and an honour to know him and have worked with him over the years and witness his extraordinary contribution both to the subject of Hepatology and Liver Transplant as a whole and also the inspiration he has provided to a whole new generation of younger consultants and registrars. He will be missed.

Dr Alex Evans

*I've known Roger since I was a medical student - and he has been an ever-present, insightful and inspirational role model for me as I've progressed in my career. I will forever be in debt to Roger's generosity, sense of humour and confidence in me as a physician and academic. I will miss his stubbornness, his mentorship and his kindness.*

Dr Richard Pinder

We in Rostock are all shocked to hear the sad news. His ongoing support for us throughout so many years very much helped us to find the place in life where we are now. Many visits in Rostock for the ISAD symposia stay in mind as will the last personal meeting at the Institute for the Festschrift for Prof. O'Grady.

We hope the Institute will not only survive but has a bright future. There is ongoing interest in scientific cooperation from our side. I guess, Prof. Williams would have liked that idea.

Really an era ends here. We will not forget Prof. Williams.

Warm regards,

Steffen Mitzner & Team

Photo – 2019-ISAD Roger & Terry Winters



Dear Stephanie and family

'Our paths crossed a few times over the many years when you accompanied Roger to the many international meetings that he attended and at which he was usually the leading speaker. He was well known, well respected and always came over loud and clear.

He will be much missed; one of medicine's real personalities.'

Howard Thomas  
Emeritus Professor, Imperial College

A tribute to the legendary Professor Roger Williams

It is with great sadness that the medical community says goodbye to the Legend, world leader in the field of Hepatology, Professor Roger Williams. A true inspiration to us doctors.

I will personally remember him always as an iconic figure in Hepatology, willing to help the younger ones and keen for new ideas, innovations, and research projects.

Professor Williams leaves a legacy that will carry on even if he is not physically here and his family can only be proud of his numerous achievements.

As per my Greek heritage, 'Ever To Excel' from Homer's 'Iliad' couldn't describe in a more suitable way his pathway in life.

Dr Alex Giakoustidis, MD PhD FRCS  
Consultant HPB & Laparoscopic Surgeon

I feel humble to be able to provide a few words in memory of Professor Roger Williams. He was the only professor - in the world - whom I never felt comfortable addressing by his first name only, not because he did not allow for it, he did, but in respect from my side - for me he will always remain the Professor. It was with excitement I got to meet Prof. Williams for the first time during one of the events of the European Association for the Study of the Liver (EASL), an EASL Masterclass, outside of Milan in 2015 where he gave the lecture "The story of my life" as an inspirational session for the young attendance of emerging liver researchers. And such an inspiration he was, for our liver community, and also for me, during my time with EASL and afterwards. We had lunch together, myself the Vice Secretary of EASL at that time, and I remember well how with clarity he elaborated for me the commercial and political powers responsible for the present epidemic of food-related and alcohol-related diseases - liver diseases in particular - and encouraged EASL and myself to work to counteract these powers. The efforts Prof. Williams laid down himself to this end, mainly reflected by the reports from his UK Lancet Commission on Liver Diseases, will serve a guiding star for priorities of our specialty in years to come - as much as his efforts in the past laid down the fundament of our specialty per se. Having visited Prof. Williams in 2018 at his newly built translational research institute (see the picture), discussing my own research, I remember leaving with a sense of awe to the broad span of his expertise and experience. In the opening sentence of his introduction to the 50th anniversary history book of EASL, Prof. Williams wrote "Tall oaks from little acorns grow", referring to EASL - but himself the tallest oak of hepatology.

With warm memories and deep respect, Prof. Tom Hemming Karlsen, Oslo, Norway, September 2020.







It is with great sadness that I add my contribution to this Liber Amicorum for Prof. I am immensely grateful to Prof for all his support and guidance during the time I have worked at the Institute of Hepatology. I joined the staff of the Institute in October 2010 and, with Prof's unfailing support, I have set-up and expanded national and international collaborations. I realise I could have published more, but I am pleased to have co-authored many highly cited papers with Prof. His enthusiasm and vision for clinical research studies has been truly inspiring. It was a tremendous honour that Prof presented such a fulsome and kind citation for my honorary Fellowship at the July 2019 ceremony at the Royal College of Physicians. I send my condolences to all Prof's family at this sad and difficult time.

Dr I Jane Cox

*So much can be written about Roger Williams and of course, so much has, but from a personal perspective, he was always a joy to work with - ever encouraging, always enquiring and unfailingly supportive when so many were not. I remember him not only as the towering figure of Hepatology, but also the man who sent me off to Central Nigeria to find the marriage register of his parents in a church in Jos, a tin-mining town with echoes of Empire. Little did he know (or perhaps he did!) that this experience would lead to a long professional collaboration with him and with colleagues in Nigeria. Clearly the place touched his heart because his boat is called "Jos of Hamble". The world is a sadder place without Roger's wisdom and joie de vivre. I shall miss him terribly.*

*Simon Taylor-Robinson*

I had worked for Professor Williams or 'Prof' as I called him for only a few years. I have many fond memories including being called Mandy, Molly or Milly when I joined, to being called his travel guru and personal IT expert!

He always made me laugh when he would ring me and ask me to pop into his office as his mobile had done something funny, it was never Prof's error it was always the phone that had done something all on its own.

I shall miss him popping out at about 9.30am most weekday mornings and stating that he needed his sustenance (which was always a coffee and chocolate biscuit) and then stating that it was all my fault that his dentist gave out to him. But whenever I said I would take it away, he always grabbed the plate and started to eat the biscuit and say "no, leave it, I'll have it just this once."

I wish to offer my deepest condolences to Stephanie and his family.

Amanda O'Neill

*A remarkable man who I was proud to have met.*

*Mr Chris Holliday*

An early turning point in my career in medicine was joining the small team of the young Roger Williams at King's College Hospital in 1967. In 1969 he sent me to the Mayo Clinic, and I returned to help him complete the new Liver Unit above Todd ward. He later supported my move down the road to St Thomas' in 1972, and I owe to him my lifelong interest in gastroenterology and research there.

I was never able to equal his unmatched enthusiasm (which was not universally welcomed), good humour and drive to make British hepatology the best in the world. He will be remembered in the many countries that sent young research fellows to work in his successive units and return to spread knowledge of hepatology there. Several large global reunions of the 'old boys', another of which RW had planned for 2020, revealed the vast global reach of his influence. He even found time to be Clinical Vice-President of the Royal College of Physicians, and later its Director of International Affairs.

He was for fifty years a towering figure of British medicine and science whose reputation travelled everywhere before him and whose successes are unlikely to be equalled.

Professor Sir Richard Thompson



## PROFESSOR ROGER WILLIAMS

Roger was a unique individual. I interacted with him intermittently for almost 50 years and never failed to be impressed by his endless enthusiasm and "can do" approach to life. Most recently I was involved with his move back to King's College Hospital where he totally ignored apparently insuperable administrative problems and bulldozed his way through bureaucratic obstacles! But all in the name of good research and improvements in patient care. He brought the same enthusiasm to bear when we were both involved with the Royal College of Physicians. He will be truly irreplaceable - and I shall miss him as both a colleague and a friend.

George Alberti



“Roger was part of my life for over thirty years. First in a research capacity with his seminal work on Halothane Hepatitis, which changed anaesthetic practice worldwide. I was then privileged to serve as a trustee for the Foundation and to see how, under Roger’s inspirational leadership, it grew into an internationally respected centre of excellence for Liver Disease. The move from UCH to King’s was a huge and successful step and the new centre at King’s is making a major contribution to British medical science. Not only did Roger continue to lead the science at an age when most researchers have retired decades before, but he could also charm funding off a tree with his wide range of contacts and the persuasive story he could offer.

Roger grew to be a very special friend over the years and Stephanie and I had some memorable times with him and Stephanie at the Opera, at Wimbledon and the theatre. I remember with great pleasure the very special dinner at Spencer House to mark his retirement from King’s. Roger was instrumental in us having Clemency to stay during her course at Reading and that friendship continues to blossom.

Roger enriched all our lives and we will all be poorer without him.”

David Gibbons



## A Selection of Twitter Tributes

<https://twitter.com/drgautammehta/timelines/1300772843265970176>

**Francesco Rubino** It is an extremely sad day for the passing of Professor Roger Williams. A legend in hepatology, a true giant. It was a privilege to collaborate with him and get to know a really great man. May his soul rest in peace.

**Motaz Fathy Saad** Sad day for the Hepatology community today... the giant Roger Williams loss May his soul rest in peace.

**Prof Steve Wigmore** Sorry to hear about the passing of Roger Williams. He and a handful of others could arguably be called the fathers of Hepatology.

**Phil Newsome** This is a very sad day on many levels. Roger made a huge contribution to liver disease in the U.K. and internationally as well as mentoring an incredible number of doctors and scientists. He will be sorely missed.

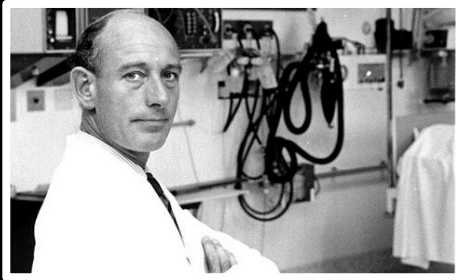
**Ahmed Elsharkawy** His intellect always amazed me and his passion for Hepatology never waned. He will be missed.

**Andy Hopkins** RIP Roger Williams, from a fan of the Greatest Footballer who ever played, and who you helped so much.

**Dr Akeel Alisa MD FRCP** He shaped my career as a role model. What I learned was my driving force for success and achievements. I am who I am because of you, I owe so much to you.

**Rachael Swann** Such sad news - I was honoured to meet him at BASL some years ago. He has been an inspiration for a generation of hepatology researchers.

**Zubir Ahmed** The last of a trio of the original cast of British Hepatology: RIP Profs Sherlock, Burroughs and Williams



## Roger Williams obituary – The Guardian

**Physician who created the UK's first liver transplant programme and worked with George Best to highlight the dangers of alcohol**

Roger Williams in the liver unit at King's College hospital, London, 1972

The six-decade career of Roger Williams, who has died at the age of 88 after suffering a heart attack, lay at the heart of an astonishing transformation in liver medicine.

In 1968, while a hepatologist at King's College hospital in London, he teamed up with the Cambridge surgeon Roy Calne to form the Cambridge-King's transplant programme and carry out the UK's first liver transplant.

Williams knew that if your kidneys fail, dialysis can keep you alive, but there is no comparable lifeline if your liver fails. Transplants were the only hope for some of his liver patients and he was determined to make a success of the venture.

In the 1960s and 70s a donor liver was not viable for long. The recipient and the medical team had to travel to the hospital where the donor had died and carry out the transplant there. Dashing at short notice to different hospitals could be detrimental to family life: in 1954 Williams had married his fellow medical student Lindsay Elliott, and they had two sons and three daughters.

Williams led the liver unit at King's from 1966 to 1996, building it into a world-class centre. In 1971 he built a laboratory on the roof of the liver ward and he had an ethos of continuous research that fed into clinical practice. Refined surgical techniques, immunosuppression drugs and the ability to keep organs viable for longer meant that as the decades passed he could offer liver transplants to more patients.

Williams' unit also researched diagnosis and treatments for conditions such as cirrhosis, hepatitis, drug poisoning and sepsis, as well as different means of supporting a failing liver, including filtering blood through charcoal. Altogether Williams published over 2,750 papers on every aspect of liver disease and trained over 600 doctors and scientists from around the world, many of whom themselves are now leaders in hepatology.

Sponsorship was key to state-of-the-art laboratories, and Williams was very successful at persuading philanthropists to support his work, including Sir Max Aitken and Lord (Arnold) Goodman. Williams and Elliott divorced in 1977, and at Goodman's office Williams met his second wife, Stephanie de Laszlo, a lawyer. They married in 1978 and had a son and two daughters.

Tall, purposeful and hugely energetic, Williams turned 65 in 1996: when King's declined to renew his contract, he was not ready to retire. Displaying what one colleague described as "an almost childlike simplicity for seeing what was right and taking what he wanted", he simply set up a new clinic, the Institute of Hepatology, at University College London, funded by his charity, the Foundation for Liver Research.

Part of a liver can be transplanted from a living donor to help someone in need of a transplant, and there in 1998 he established the first adult-to-adult living donor transplantation programme in the UK. While he was at UCL, as well as continuing to see patients, he developed a support device in 2002, known as MARS (molecular adsorbents recirculating system) which filtered out toxins from the blood. He also researched the causes and treatment of ACLF (acute-on-chronic liver failure) when a patient with cirrhosis suddenly deteriorates.

In 2000 Williams asked a new patient what he did for a living. Paying little attention to sport, he had not recognised the footballer George Best. Williams oversaw Best's treatment and his transplant, conducted by the surgeon Nigel Heaton, in 2002. He and Best together raised awareness of liver disease, addressing a cross-party group of MPs about alcoholism.

He became very fond of Best and in 2005 had the sad task of telling his family that he had died. His own daughter, Fiona, died suddenly of heart disease and this helped equip him to empathise with grieving relatives.

An administrative attempt to unify Williams' unit at UCL with the liver unit at the Royal Free Hospital in north London was not a success, and Williams was thrilled to be able to leave. He went back to King's, and set up a new institute – his third. He arrived in July 2016, in time for a celebration of 50 years of liver disease treatment at King's.

Williams was horrified when the government ushered in “the absolute lunacy of 24-hour drinking” in 2005, and by the rise of obesity and fatty liver disease. Though politically he was an arch-conservative, chairing the lobby group Conservative Health, he was furious that the UK was failing to deliver on the opportunity he had created for it to improve liver health.

He teamed up with the Lancet and put together a standing commission on liver disease to make evidence-based recommendations. From 2014, he wrote and edited the commission's annual reports, handing in the last one in June 2020.

Born in Bexleyheath, Kent (now the London borough of Bexley), Roger was an only child, and the family moved to Southampton shortly after his birth. His father, Stanley, was an estate agent and his mother, Doris (nee Clatworthy), ran the sailmaker JR Williams in Hamble. His parents had married in Jos, Nigeria, where Stanley was an engineer, and his mother gave young Williams his first boat, named “Jos of Hamble”. Throughout his life Williams loved racing – never missing Cowes Week – and gave all his subsequent boats the same name.

Williams attended St Mary's college in Southampton. A bout of diphtheria at the age of 13 inspired his choice of career, and just four years later he began studying medicine at the Royal London

hospital qualifying in 1953. National Service followed at the Queen Alexandra military hospital, next to what is now Tate Britain on the Thames at Millbank, where he came across soldiers with hepatitis. Williams was beginning to think the liver was the most interesting organ in the body, with its hundreds of functions and unique ability to regenerate.

In 1959 he began training with Sheila Sherlock, the doyenne of liver disease, at the Royal Free hospital and after seven years became a consultant at King's College hospital. Thereafter he would maintain a friendly rivalry between King's and the Royal Free.

In 1993 Williams was appointed CBE. At his 80th party, he said the “the thing I've lived all my life for is ... work”. It was not entirely a joke – even his honeymoon coincided with a hepatology conference in Jerusalem. But he also made time for opera, sailing, tennis and latterly a farm he acquired near Salisbury.

He is survived by Stephanie, seven children and 13 grandchildren.

- Roger Stanley Williams, hepatologist, born 28 August 1931; died 26 July 2020



Thank you for inviting me to be included in your tribute.

Given the unique circumstances of my transplant in 1987, my first recollection of Dr Williams, as he was then, was hearing his voice "booming" an instruction at a Sister who immediately did as she was asked. He was highly revered and certainly the voice of authority on Todd Ward, yet he was kind and gentle with a calming influence, whenever he came to see me, I always knew I was safe.

He often referred to me as his "just in time girl" especially when he brought doctors from around the world to see the work of the liver unit. It was on one of those occasions when my parents were in my room, bags packed, after being told they had to vacate the room on the ward. Dr Williams was horrified and immediately found them alternative accommodation. He knew how important it was for my recovery to have them on site but also how important it was to remain as a family. He also gave his time freely to ensure his patients were progressing. One Sunday afternoon, I was surprised when he came to see me from a day sailing, he just wanted to check I was alright, dedication second to none.

Over the 33 years of knowing him, we developed a special bond, I imagine he showed all his patients equal fondness but I will always be his just in time girl and he will hold a very special place in my heart for as long as I live. He was and always will be my hero.

My family and I will forever be indebted to him and his team, the researchers and dedicated staff, Prof Sir Roy Calne and my donor for my lifesaving treatment. I will miss him greatly, but I am honoured to have known him personally and not just as an NHS number.

He deserved to be Knighted and whilst we tried, to have the honour bestowed on him it was not to be. He is my Knight in a white coat, he set incredible standards and examples, how many other people would still be working at 88 years old, leading on vital research and still caring for patients.

Superheroes do not always wear capes, mine was either in white or a smart suit, with a reassuring smile and a twinkle in his eye. He will never be forgotten and will live on in our hearts and memories.

God Bless Prof, you have left a wonderful legacy, saved countless lives and the work you started will continue in your name.

Much love always, Sally Williams-McGlone



*Very sad news to hear the death of Roger William CBE, Liver Disease Specialist UK.*

*I knew him since 1964 and assisted him in my several positions; as a Medical Doctor, Author, Journalist, Politician and Expert Witness in British Courts.*

*He had a pleasant personality, supportive attitude and splendid achievements. I had close contact with him for a long time when he was President and then Chairman of Conservative Health UK. I am Vice President and used to take Chair at Annual General Meetings, when he stood for re-elections. We relied on each other's support.*

*I wish God gives him peace to his soul and a place in heaven. My deep sympathies to his family and friends, who would celebrate his life. Very sad news indeed!*

*Dr Bashir Qureshi*

"The legacy of Prof Williams will live on in his publications, his institute but most essentially in the legions of doctors and researchers he trained and mentored over the decades. Even though I was from a different continent, my constant interactions with Prof directly or through Jane, Shilpa and Antonio made me feel part of the Institute's extended family. His continued curiosity and keen insights were greatly sought after and only matched by his humanistic values as he approached patients, research or papers. I feel myself extraordinarily lucky to have been supported by his vision and to be part of his orbit. He will be greatly missed but never forgotten."

Jasmohan S. Bajaj, MBBS, MD  
Professor of Medicine  
Virginia Commonwealth University and Richmond VA  
Medical Center  
Richmond, Virginia, USA

Dear Roger

*When I heard about your death, I could not believe it.*

*I though you and your energy, were immortal.*

*But you are immortal since you will never be forgotten.*

*I will miss you and our discussion on HBV.*

Professor Antonio Bertolotti  
Emerging Infectious Diseases Program,  
Duke-NUS Medical School, Singapore

*"A happy warrior -- for evidence-based medicine. Leadership contribution on new health policy causes well into the 80s. We will miss you so much, not least your sense of humour and appetite for discussion. Your authority came from hard work for patients over changing decades. Our best tribute would be to carry on the work on prevention and improved care for liver disease."*

Nick Bosanquet  
Professor of Health Policy  
Imperial College

#### Remembering Prof

I was deeply sad to hear of Prof's passing. He was someone I believed would go on forever. Even though I worked at the institute for a short time, I can remember Prof's energy, enthusiasm, determination, support, and knowledge (he was so up to date with literature and always gave amazing feedback). He made one realise what it meant to do something one was passionate about and to do it wholeheartedly. Even after a surgery, he would come in and no one would even guess. A funny and fond memory I have is that in the first few months of my joining, he could never remember my name and I was called either Dippy or Dipsy or Dipply or sometimes Dittly! Other treasured memories amongst many are his love for chocolate biscuits and his enthusiasm at being Father Christmas and handing out gifts. It is sad that I will not see his cheeky smile or hear his gruff voice but he will definitely be remembered and missed for a long time. I feel honoured to have worked in his institute and to have interacted with him even a little and I know his legacy will go on forever.

Dipa Natarajan

In all things liver related, Professor Williams opinion was the one that mattered and the one we sought out!

Whether you agreed or not with his perspective was irrelevant, he always had a very strong point of view and there was always a lesson to be learnt. His marvellous delivery of things you didn't like or want to hear were formative, honest and are already very much missed by all who knew or worked for him.

Prof had high expectations and challenged himself and the people around him constantly - to work better, work harder and achieve what he could see we were capable of.

I treasure the lessons he taught me in the 28 years I worked for him and aspire to pass these down to the generations of liver scientists to come.

Shilpa Chokshi



Institute staff "Prof will be forever in our thoughts and his legacy will live on forever."

Lola Ajayi

Betsy Arefaine

Gabriella Assante

Lorenzo Caciolli

Sara Campinoti

Shilpa Chokshi

Jason Coombes

Doug Corrigan

Jane Cox

Natalie Day

Stijn Den Daas

Nicola Harris

Dhruti Devshi

Ewald Doornebal

Sveva Fagiolino

Tsin Koay

Claire McQuitty

Gautam Mehta

Sameer Mistry

Amanda O'Neill

Enda O'Sullivan

Elena Palma

Vish Patel

Sandra Phillips

Antonio Riva

Ugo Soffientini

Kate Tourna

Luca Urbani

Neil Youngson







photo by Antonio Riva

