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Glenys Kinnock

Glenys Kinnock expressed pleasure at the opportunity to return to her Alma Mater, and reinforced Sir Richard's enthusiasm for a pioneering new project. She complemented Cardiff University for building on its already admirable reputation for research excellence by developing the Centre for Socioeconomic Research.

"The Centre's guiding principle - an emphasis on Quality of Life - is an approach which I welcome" said Mrs Kinnock. "It puts the patient at the centre of the provision and delivery of healthcare, a position which they should always occupy." One of the future challenges within health provision will be for the pharmaceutical industry, in partnership with academics, to place greater emphasis on the expectations, views and social values of patients.

She explained that the holistic approach to research which the Centre embodies is also echoed by the European Commission's priorities for supporting research activities across the EU, and wished the Centre well in its bid for EU funding.

The Centre for Socioeconomic Research is being launched at a time when more importance is being attached to the development of consumerism in healthcare. Glenys Kinnock suggested the Centre will heighten awareness, improve decision-making and develop methodologies to the benefit of many patient groups.

Lunch at the opening of the Centre for Socioeconomic Research: Left to right: Professor Stuart Walker, *Chairman of the Board of the Centre*; Sir William Asscher, *formerly Chairman of the Committee on the Safety of Medicines*; Sir Brian Smith, *Vice Chancellor, Cardiff University*; Rt Hon Jon Owen-Jones, *Member of Parliament*; Professor David Luscombe, *Head of the Welsh School of Pharmacy, Cardiff University*; Sir Richard Sykes, *Chairman of Glaxo Wellcome*; Professor Hayden Ellis, *Chair, Research Committee, Cardiff University*; Professor Paul Nicholls, *Professor of Pharmacology, Cardiff University*; Dr Sam Salek, *Director of the Centre for Socioeconomic Research* and Professor Ilora Finlay, *Professor of Palliative Medicine, University of Wales College of Medicine, Cardiff*.



The Centre for Socioeconomic Research

A patient-focused Centre opens in Cardiff

Quality of Life for patients is the guiding principle of a new Centre in Wales that could revolutionise doctor-patient relationships. The Centre for Socioeconomic Research at Cardiff University will be at the forefront of the shift towards greater patient participation in the treatment of many chronic illnesses, including cancer, Alzheimer's Disease, Multiple Sclerosis and Parkinson's Disease.

The Centre at the Welsh School of Pharmacy was formally opened on 26th November 1999 by Sir Richard Sykes, Chairman of Glaxo Wellcome, supported by Mrs Glenys Kinnock, Member of the European Parliament for Wales. This "visionary" centre has "tremendous potential to benefit both patients and innovation" said Sir Richard in his opening remarks. He then went on to unveil a commemorative plaque.

The Vice Chancellor of Cardiff University, Sir Brian Smith, stated that the mission of the new Centre was to provide outcomes from quality of life research projects and to establish closer links between social sciences, psychology and medicine. Sir Brian emphasised the challenge of effective healthcare delivery and the balance required between limited resources and patient choice.

Glenys Kinnock expressed her confidence that under its first director, Dr Sam Salek, the Centre would prove to be an important player for driving developments forward for the benefit of patients.

Joining in the day's celebrations were over 100 representatives drawn from the international pharmaceutical industry, healthcare charities and academia. Their coming together signifies greater recognition of the importance of evaluating the holistic approach to drug treatment through socioeconomic research.

Following the opening ceremony, guests were able to view research findings from the Centre displayed on an array of posters. This special occasion was then concluded with lunch for the visitors and special guests including Mary Baker, Executive Chairman of the Parkinson's Disease Society of the United Kingdom.

From left to right: Dr Sam Salek, *Director of the Centre for Socioeconomic Research*, Sir Richard Sykes, *Chairman of Glaxo Wellcome*, Glenys Kinnock, *MEP*, and Sir Brian Smith, *Vice Chancellor, Cardiff University*.



The Centre for Socioeconomic Research

Each patient's perception of how their condition and treatment affects their quality of life underlies the activities of the Centre for Socioeconomic Research. The Centre aims to create awareness of the non-medical factors that affect a patient's condition and thereby stimulate dialogue. It is hoped that this will lead to doctors and patients making more rational decisions, resulting in either a change of medicine, a new medicine or a completely different approach to treatment.

Dr Sam Salek, Director of the new Centre, stated that the benefits are incalculable particularly when you consider the high incidence of patients who discontinue their treatment. For instance, between 26% and 59% of elderly patients fail to comply with prescribed treatment. The consequences of non-compliance are potentially severe, not only for the patient's health but also for the economic burden on the healthcare system.

"The establishment of the Centre is a timely move towards believing in the power of consumerism in healthcare, as a result of which we will, no doubt, witness transformation in the industry" said Dr Salek. "Once patients realise that they can influence their quality of life through a new doctor-patient relationship, Britain's healthcare system can strive for advancements on a non-medical basis".

A patient focused healthcare system is already strongly advocated in Europe and the USA. The new Centre in Cardiff will be the first in the UK to progress this approach from a research level to clinical practice.

The Centre has already made a significant contribution to the rapidly developing field of quality of life research by publishing a comprehensive compendium of assessment instruments. These are the tools used by researchers to evaluate the impact of medicines and other treatments on a patient's quality of life. New instruments and novel techniques to further aid such research are being investigated by the Centre.

Professor Stuart Walker, Chair of the Policy Board for the Centre for Socioeconomic Research and Director of the Centre for Medicines Research International, said that Cardiff University has been forward-looking in establishing the Centre. At a time when evaluating the cost-effectiveness of innovative medicines is considered critical, the Centre "will not only be of significant value to pharmaceutical companies worldwide as they develop quality of life instruments and carry out health economic studies, but will ultimately lead to the improvement of patient care".

Sir Richard Sykes visits the Centre's staff.



Sir Richard Sykes

The excellent reputation already earned by the Centre for Socioeconomic Research was noted by Sir Richard in his opening address. In particular, developing the unique Compendium of Quality of Life Instruments “has undoubtedly been a key to creating a network of expertise around the world”.

Sir Richard went on to describe how quality of life can be a meaningful measurement in the clinical research programmes needed to develop a new medicine. Quality of life should be used more regularly to complement the more traditional parameters of safety and efficacy in both clinical trials and practice decisions.

“Today we are being asked more and more about the value of medicines, in addition to their clinical benefits”, said Sir Richard. While the pharmaceutical industry as a whole is fully committed to delivering medicines of value, we do not believe that health outcomes data can easily prove the cost effectiveness or value of new medicines before they are widely used in the marketplace. The consequences of such a stance could well be damaging for patients and for innovation.

Understanding the health outcomes from a particular treatment is a dynamic process that does not finish at the time of a regulatory submission. After marketing, the picture can change, as the true impact on parameters such as surgery workloads or practice budgets, not to mention quality of life, becomes apparent. Complex judgements about “value”, cannot be accurately taken in advance of a medicine’s wider usage.

The Centre for Socioeconomic Research has tremendous potential to benefit both patients and innovation. Sir Richard concluded that patients, as they become more knowledgeable about their health and treatment options, will want to be involved in assessing response to treatment. At the same time academia and the pharmaceutical industry will be able to work more closely together in developing new quality of life measures. Building on its solid foundation and visionary start Sir Richard predicted that the Centre will bring continued credit to the University of Wales. He wished success in all future endeavours to those involved.



Left: Ms Mary Baker, Executive Chairman of the Parkinson's Disease Society meets Sir Richard Sykes and Dr Sam Salek.



Below: Visitors attend the lunch to celebrate the opening.