

## Laudatio to Professor Leslie Baruch Brent on the occasion of his honorary ESOT membership

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It is a great pleasure and honour to introduce Professor Leslie Brent to the members and guests of the European Society of Organ Transplantation. Professor Brent is an outstanding scientist and an iconic figure in fields of immunology and transplantation.

Leslie Brent began his scientific career as an undergraduate at the University of Birmingham, where he studied zoology. It was in Birmingham that he met Sir Peter Medawar, the Head of the Department of Zoology. Medawar recognized that Leslie was an able undergraduate and offered him the opportunity to move to University College London with himself and Rupert Billingham to study for a PhD. Leslie took that chance, and so began his work on transplantation tolerance. Brent and Billingham worked very closely together in the laboratory for 6 years under Medawar's guidance, and it was during this time that they designed and carried out experiments in mice to demonstrate that immunological tolerance could be induced deliberately by introducing antigens into the developing immune system [1,2]. In addition to this landmark finding, Billingham and Brent also discovered what they initially called 'runt disease', now universally known as graft versus host disease [3]. The experiments that demonstrated these important findings required not only intellectual ability and creativity but also great technical ingenuity and perseverance. The results were published in a series of landmark papers, notably the paper in *Nature* published in 1953 [1] and considered again by Leslie 50 years later [4].

Following his PhD, Leslie worked as a post-doctoral fellow in the US before returning to the UK to the National Institute of Medical Research at Mill Hill. He took up the post of Professor of Zoology at Southampton University in 1965. However, it was not long before he returned to London to be Professor and Head of the Department of Immunology at St Mary's Hospital Medical School (1969–1990). Here, he not only continued his own studies on transplantation tolerance training and mentoring numerous PhD students and post-doctoral fellows but also, very importantly, created an environment that fostered the career of other scientists and supported the development of immunology at St Mary's including



the creation of a clinical immunology focus and a major focus on HIV and AIDS.

Leslie has taken an active role in the development of the field of transplantation throughout his career. He was President of The Transplantation Society from 1976 to 1978, and received the Medawar Prize, one of the most prestigious awards in the field of transplantation, in 1994 [5].

In this introduction, I have focussed on Leslie's scientific career and achievements; however, it is important to note that Leslie is a man of many parts, and for those who are interested in finding out more, I would recommend his latest book [6,7].

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