The passing of Professor John Fitzpatrick represented the loss of a luminary of Irish medicine, a man with a global reputation in urology research and a world leader in the delivery of surgical prostate cancer care. A graduate of University College Dublin (UCD), John moved to London to specialize in urology under the tutelage of the eminent surgeon John Wickham. He spent a formative period at Mainz in Germany, perfecting his skills in the then newly developed discipline of minimally invasive surgery. He returned to Dublin, initially to Trinity College Dublin, and then in 1986 became Professor of Surgery at UCD and consultant urologist at the Mater Misericordiae Dei Hospital, where he spent the rest of his academic and medical career. He led the development of the discipline of urology in Ireland, and many fine urologists, both in Ireland and globally, benefitted from his guiding mentorship.

John was one of the early advocates of the use of prostate specific antigen as a biomarker for early detection of the disease but always pushed for improved tools that would inform the clinical decision-making process [1]. His leadership in prostate cancer care and research has undoubtedly led to significant strides forward in the management of this common disease. At a local level, John was instrumental in establishing the Irish Prostate Cancer Research Consortium, emphasizing his vision of the need for multidisciplinary research to tackle this complex diseases.

His keen interest and promotion of research straddled the continuum from basic science to translational research, with the primary purpose of identifying the clinical unmet need [2] and how it would impact on the patient’s outcome. His research on the discovery and validation of new biomarkers helped inform appropriate treatments for early stage disease, while an increased understanding of the basic cellular mechanisms of treatment resistance fueled the development of new treatment options for prostate cancer patients [3].

As Editor-in-Chief of the BJU International (BJU Int), he helped champion the use of magnetic resonance imaging in guiding targeted therapy in this disease. He was also among the first advocates in Britain and Ireland of total surgical removal of the prostate and used the nerve-sparing technique developed by Patrick Walsh at John’s Hopkins to cure men with prostate cancer while preserving their sexual function.

John received numerous international accolades, including election to Membership of the American Association of Genito-Urinary Surgeons, a distinction rarely conferred on non-Americans. He served as President of the British Association of Urological Surgeons and was a visiting Professor in more than 100 international institutions on the five continents, reflecting his global reputation. He was a born teacher and frequent contributor to the educational activities of the Society for Translational Oncology. His dedication to research and its promotion led to him becoming Head of Research at the Irish Cancer Society (ICS), following his retirement as Professor of Surgery at UCD. His regrettably short period at the ICS coincided with a step change in the Society’s support for research in Ireland,
as characterized by the development of Collaborative Cancer Research Centres, an initiative that had John’s personality stamped all over it. He was in the process of developing a national cancer research strategy for Ireland when his untimely death robbed us of one of the world’s foremost urologists and a redoubtable champion of research.

**M.L. Note:** I was fortunate to collaborate with John and learn from his unrivaled experience in cancer care and research. The accompanying interview took place during our partner organization’s the European School of Oncology (ESO) Conference on *Molecular Diagnostics in Clinical Oncology* at Viareggio in Italy, a conference where both John and I were speaking. It was strange to deliver the opening lecture at this year’s ESO conference, *Molecular Diagnostics, Genomics and Epigenetics in Clinical Oncology*, in Rome without my colleague and friend.

**References**

