

Martin Rowan, the Sysmex Scientific Adviser and Friend

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When I met Martin Rowan for the first time in early 1992, he was the head of the pathology department in Glasgow Western Infirmary. Sysmex UK had recently installed there the first automated haematology sample transport system in Europe, the Sysmex HS. Martin was, from the beginning, convinced about the benefit of this system as he was facing a big increase in workload without having the possibility to enhance the staff in his laboratory. Shortly after the HS was running in his laboratory, Martin summarised his first experience with the HS in a paper called "The Iron Horse"¹⁾. This paper was very helpful for Sysmex in convincing new customers and was the beginning of a 13 year relationship between Sysmex and himself.

Martin retired in 1996 when he became the European Scientific Adviser to Sysmex, It was then that I was asked to be the window person to the company for him. Initially, I was quite humbled because Martin Rowan was a really big name in international laboratory haematology. This feeling was completely unjustified as the collaboration with Martin turned out to be very easy as he completely lacked any ego and had a special sense of humour. In fact, Martin understood from the beginning of his "new job", the particular needs and interests of the in vitro diagnostic industry and always eloquently argued in this direction, never forgetting however the ethical view of a medical doctor. He enjoyed healthy debate and used to express his sometimes strong and forthright views. He liked to be in the role of an adviser; his preferred term in these situations was "let's be the devil's advocate".

During the nine years of Martin Rowan being the Scientific Adviser, Sysmex benefited enormously from his expertise. His contribution in the Sysmex evolution and growth has been immense. This contribution was brought about by allowing Sysmex to share his vision for automated haematology and, in return, Sysmex has enabled some of this vision to become reality. This vision and contribution has not been exclusive to haematology but also with new business fields in more recent years, for example Urinalysis and even more recently the focus on Sysmex Life Science research areas.

In recognition of the years Martin Rowan dedicated to the scientific face of Sysmex, SYSMEX EUROPE GMBH has named the first Sysmex Outstanding Science Award the "The Robert Martin Rowan Memorial Award". This award will be awarded in 2007 to individuals who made significant contributions for trend-setting scientific studies in the field of blood cell analysis. It is likely the awardees will also deliver lectures at the next "European Scientific Symposium" honouring the man that used to chair these events and that gave so much to Sysmex and to laboratory haematology.

The premature death of Martin Rowan caused the loss of a teacher, colleague, and friend to me and all of us fortunate enough to have been touched by him. We are missing him every day.

Reference

- 1) Rowan R.M.: *Laboratory News May - LIMS, 1993.*