

Celebrating the life of Professor Valentine (Val) Macaulay- Emeritus Associate Professor of Medical Oncology at the University of Oxford.

It is with heavy hearts that we share the news of the passing of our esteemed colleague, Professor Valentine (Val) Macaulay, who passed away on Tuesday after a courageous fight with cancer. Val's unwavering dedication to her research and compassionate care for her students and colleagues has left an indelible mark on our department. Below, we present a heartfelt tribute from Professor Sarah Blagden who had the privilege of knowing Val intimately, highlighting her remarkable career, her unwavering spirit, and the profound love she had for her family and science.



We are shocked and saddened by the news of Val's death on Tuesday from cancer. It is sometimes inappropriate to describe someone as waging a battle against cancer, but in Val's case it was exactly that. She fought a four-year war against not only her own disease but that of her patients as well. Undaunted by her final hospice admission, Val talked excitedly about the results of the WINGMEN study, the clinical trial that was the culmination of many decades of research into insulin-like growth factors (IGFs). Her laptop was beside her hospital bed and she continued her lab meetings and emails, ensuring all loose ends were tied and all salaries for her team were secured. As a testament to her popularity, she had a constant stream of visitors and to each she was as unfailingly kind and supportive as always.

In 2022, as part of the Athena Swan "voices" project, we interviewed Val about her career, and she provided a photo from her student days. The feeling that radiated from her was one of love: she adored her husband and three sons, describing motherhood as her "greatest joy" and doted on her students. She provided pastoral care to many (if not most) staff during her time in the Department of Oncology. Her

other great love was science and her curiosity for discovery was imprinted into her life as if through a stick of rock.

Val was the eldest of three children born into a medical family. Her parents Peggy and Jerry Kirk met over the dissection table at Charing Cross Hospital in 1947. Her parents had a huge influence on Val. Her father, a modest and self-effacing man, became an eminent academic surgeon and a prolific author of surgical textbooks. He was also an inspiring educator who continued to teach until he was 90. By the age of four, Val had decided on a career in medicine.

She won a bursary to attend South Hampstead Girls School and in 1973 went to Charing Cross Hospital Medical School (CXHMS) – now Imperial College, qualifying in 1979. Here she met her husband Andrew when he stepped into the lift wearing oily overalls and carrying an engine. Mistaking him for the lift engineer, she soon discovered he was a fellow medical student and finally agreed to marry him after four years of proposals. Andrew was a huge support to Val throughout her career and was a constant presence by her bedside during her illness.

One of her first jobs was as Senior House Officer to Professor Ken Bagshawe who pioneered cisplatin to treat germ cell tumours. The experience of curing young people with advanced cancers confirmed Val's ambition to train in medical oncology. After working as a registrar at the Royal Marsden Hospital she undertook an MD in lung cancer biology and was the first to identify IGFs as autocrine growth factors for cancer. After a PhD with Alan Ashworth, Val was invited by Adrian Harris to complete her clinical training in Oxford. She then obtained an MRC Clinician Scientist fellowship to pursue the study of IGF biology at the WIMM. This support allowed her to establish a lab group and was followed by a CRUK Senior Fellowship and HEFCE Senior Clinical Lectureship. As a group lead, Val was hands-on and developed the careers of countless students to independence. She was a strong advocate for women in academia, encouraging them to find their voice, be assertive and ready to delegate, skills she regretted not discovering until late in her career.

It is easy to picture Val's infectious smile, her enthusiasm and bursts of laughter. She will be greatly missed by her colleagues and friends in the Departments of Oncology and Surgery where she leaves a lasting legacy of love and kindness. Our thoughts and condolences are with Andrew and their sons.