

Dr Andrew Coe, Hon DSc

Thursday, 20<sup>th</sup> July 2023, am

Chancellor

Our honorary graduand this morning is the paediatrician and neonatology expert: DR ANDREW COE. And my very, very good friend and colleague.

Andrew, better known to many as Andy, retired in 2018 from his post as Consultant Paediatrician in the NHS, at University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire (UHCW) where he had worked for 40 years in neonatology, general paediatrics and asthma. Andy qualified as a doctor in 1977, and as a consultant in 1990 in which he served in local service, regional, national, and international roles, working across the NHS and government, as well as with Royal College and Academic Colleagues, and he and I first met in the mid 1990s.

On appointment as a consultant, Andy, along with his wife Chris, an accomplished children's nurse, researcher and midwife, moved to Kenilworth where he and Chris settled with their three children, Alex, Peter and Mike. Towards the end of his clinical service, Andy also served as a phase lead at Warwick Medical School, supporting our finalists in the last stage of their training as they headed for qualification and life as a doctor. In this capacity, he has helped and cared for tens of thousands of children and their families across Coventry, Warwickshire & beyond.

Today, however, we honour him particularly for his work with The Grace Research Fund, established in 2004 to increase high quality research into the care of premature babies and their families in Coventry and Warwickshire. From its inception, Andy had a very personal involvement with this charity. During his time at the UHCW Neo-Natal Intensive Care Unit (the NICU), he treated a young patient called Grace, born 14 weeks early, weighing just one pound. Although able to return home at 5 months, Grace later developed pulmonary hypertension and, sadly, died in hospital. Grace's parents and Andy wanted to create a relevant legacy for Grace and so The Grace Research Fund was created, with Andy as its Chair.

The Fund built on the relationship between the University of Warwick, UHCW and Coventry University. Over a period of 14 years – it was brought to a natural close in 2018 – it supported significant research projects including understanding the potential causes of premature birth, a study into how premature babies experience pain, and an intervention on improving the support of parents and families of premature babies who spend their first weeks or months on the NICU.

That it was able to do so was almost entirely a result of the fundraising efforts of Andrew Coe, who proved to be an extremely 'hands-on' Chair. Andrew masterminded events such as 'The Big Push' (a fancy-dress trolley race from UHCW and local hospitals to the University of Warwick, collecting donations on the way), a Winter Ball which raised around £10,000 for the fund in 2011, and

sponsorship from Coventry Football Club which adopted the Fund as its charity for the 2013-14 season with players wearing the Fund's logo on their shirts.

We rowed a dragon boat from Warwickshire to London, (I may still have the calluses!) and had teams who took part on behalf of the Fund in the annual Two Castles Race between Warwick and Kenilworth, as well as the great north run, who were always invited back to Andrew's home for a celebratory drink. With such events, Andrew spearheaded a fund-raising campaign which, by the time the Grace Research Fund was wound up in 2018, had raised around £500,000 for its vital research.

The Grace Research Fund was essentially a local charity, devoted to improving lives in our local region, which is fortunate to have well-equipped hospitals and, here at Warwick, a leading research-intensive university whose Medical School has a particular interest in neonatology. Funds were raised by local people – often by those who had personally benefitted from the Fund's support for their premature babies – through local events and institutions.

The University of Warwick acted as the Fund's administrator; our Development Office promoted it; our students and staff participated enthusiastically in its fund-raising activities (the Big Trolley Push was particularly popular!) and several of its funded research projects were carried out at Warwick Medical School, in collaboration with UHCW. But although working on a local scale, the Grace Research Fund has produced results that have national, even international, application. An entrant in the Two Castles Race summed it up: 'I wanted to run,' he said, 'because it works locally but supports research that fundamentally makes a difference to people's lives around the world.'

The success of the Grace Research Fund reflects, above all, the energy, hard work and leadership of its Chair, our honorary graduand, Dr Andy Coe, of whom I'm immensely proud, both to know and be counted as a friend of his. We congratulate him on his achievements and are delighted to welcome him to the University today.

Chancellor: in the name of the Senate, I present to you for admission to the degree of Doctor of Science, *honoris causa*, DR ANDREW COE.

827 words