

Simon Croft

Doctor of Science

Durham Cathedral, 29 June 2022

Professor Simon Croft graduated from Durham in 1971 with a BSc in Zoology. His first vocation was teaching. However, bioscience called, and he began his research career - a PhD with David Molyneux at Liverpool. This exposed Simon to the world of Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs), specifically leishmaniasis and trypanosomiasis. Leaving a passion to relieve the terrible burden of these diseases.

Simon's NTD career developed during Research Fellowships at the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine and the University of Salford, before a Senior Scientist position at the Wellcome Research Laboratories in Beckenham. Here Simon pursued his desire to find much needed new treatments for the most devastating diseases of the developing world, manifested in his discovery of miltefosine as an anti-leishmanial. This drug is now licensed for visceral leishmaniasis, a fatal disease which impacts in east Africa and south Asia. It remains the only anti-leishmanial available in tablet form.

In 1989, Simon took up a post at the renowned London School for Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, rising to Professor in 2003. Here he continued his search for new and improved treatments for tropical diseases, leading the adoption of the antifungal AmBisome for visceral leishmaniasis. In recent years this has become the primary treatment.

Combined, these experiences gave Simon direct insight into the potential of public-private partnerships to provide new drugs for NTDs. It was therefore fitting that, in 2004, he became the founding R&D Director of the Drugs for Neglected Diseases Initiative - a not-for-profit Product Development Partnership. During three years in Geneva Simon built a portfolio of 16 discovery, pre-clinical and clinical projects for the trypanosomiasis and leishmaniasis.

Ever restless, Simon returned to the London School in 2007 to resume his research, head up the Faculty of Infectious and Tropical Diseases and launch the Bloomsbury

Institute for Pathogen Research. Amazingly, Simon also found the time to serve as the president of the British Society for Parasitology (BSP) overseeing the modernisation of this esteemed academic society in time for its 50th anniversary in 2012.

Despite having known Simon as a scientist and friend for many years it was during my time serving with him on the BSP Council that I saw at close hand his energy, commitment and good-humoured inclusive approach to effective management. It is this combination of qualities and abilities that have led to many honours and responsibilities, including at his *alma mater*, Durham. Departmental seminars (1979 and 2012), conference contributions (BSP Durham, 2016) and his highly valued stewardship of the International Advisory Board for the Durham led MRC GCRF Global Network for NTDs (a £7.8M grant). And now, more than 50 years after his graduation – this honorary doctorate.

I can only thank you Simon for your support of parasitology as a discipline at Durham, and globally, and as you retire from academia – please enjoy the University's recognition of your exceptional achievements, particularly in terms of impact on global health. You remain one of its finest ambassadors.

Chancellor I present Simon Croft to receive the degree of Doctor of Science honoris causa.