

Yusuf Hamied receives first Chemistry Alumni Medal

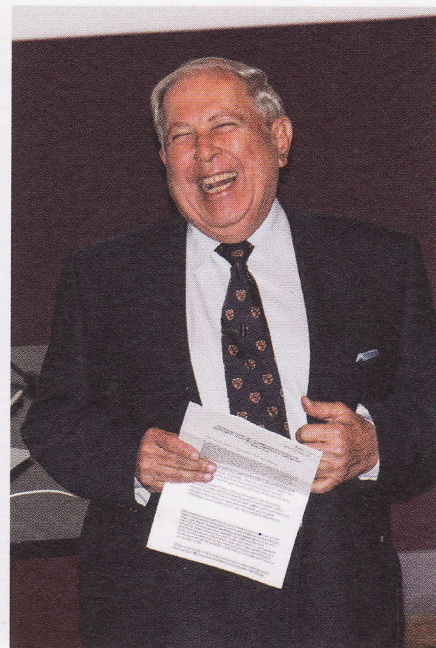
Dr Yusuf Hamied was awarded the first ever Department of Chemistry Alumni Medal in a ceremony on 17 March 2016. The Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cambridge, Professor Sir Leszek Borysiewicz, presented the medal "for services to the community that have brought honour to the Department of Chemistry".

As CEO and Chair of the Indian pharmaceutical firm Cipla, Dr Yusuf Hamied campaigned to provide low-cost generic antiretrovirals to people primarily in sub-Saharan Africa with HIV and Aids, reducing the cost from \$15,000 to \$350 per person/year, or under a dollar a day. These actions saved millions of lives, and were memorialised in the internationally acclaimed documentary *Fire in the Blood*.

Head of Department Professor John Pyle hosted the ceremony, which included talks by Professors Christopher Abell, Christopher Dobson and Clare Grey on their high profile research. Chris Abell, a

Fellow at Christ's College, also talked about Yusuf's happy and productive time there as a young Chemistry undergraduate and graduate student in the 1950s.

In his acceptance speech, Yusuf spoke movingly about the lifelong influence of his chemistry supervisor and mentor, Lord Alexander Todd, and reminisced about his first encounter as a young student in 1953 with Todd in Mumbai. When asked if there were any special qualifications required for admission Professor Todd replied, "We have no rules, we admit anyone whom we consider suitable to be a student." How times have changed.





Yusuf also recalled the many other notable scientists and teachers who influenced him, including Professor Ronald Norrish, Dr Herchel Smith, his senior tutor Dr Lucan Pratt, and his contemporaries, now Emeritus Professor Ian Fleming and Dr Mike Blackburn.

Yusuf reminded the audience about the wave of scientific associates called the "Toddlers" who arrived from Manchester with Todd in 1942, and introduced one of the original Toddlers, Professor Cedric Hassall, who was in the audience. Professor Hassall, 95, then presented his "Toddler Tie" for the Todd-Hamied seminar room, which has a display of Todd memorabilia. Yusuf said, "Its presence will provide us with an indelible link to the glorious past history of this great chemistry department."

Yusuf also spoke about critical issues in healthcare such as antimicrobial resistance, resistant TB and cancer, and the huge healthcare divide between

the developed and undeveloped world. After hearing Dobson's talk, Yusuf added Alzheimer's and other protein misfolding diseases to the list, and said: "lives cannot be sacrificed at the altar of corporate profit and greed... the overall achievement of an industry, company or an individual cannot be judged by monetary gain, but by the capacity and capability to contribute towards the moral and social obligations to society."

Lastly Yusuf paid tribute to his parents and the department saying, "My parents gave me life. Cambridge educated me, taught me how to live, and how to contribute to the world. I will always be indebted to this great institution and what it stands for."

A reception for Yusuf's family, friends, associates and members of the department was held after the ceremony in the Todd-Hamied room.