

## Ms Gillian Beattie

The honorary degree of Doctor of Science was conferred upon Gillian Beattie by the Chancellor the Hon Justice Kim Santow at the Faculty of Health Sciences graduation ceremony held at 9.30am on 30 March 2007.



The Chancellor with Ms Beattie, *photo, copyright Memento Photography.*

### Citation

Chancellor, I have the honour to present Gillian Beattie BSc for the conferring of the degree of Doctor of Science (honoris causa).

Gillian Beattie graduated from this university in 1961 with a BSc in Biochemistry/Microbiology. After a stint as a research technician at Hammersmith Hospital, London she moved to the United States to work first at the Salk Institute and later at the University of California, San Diego in the Cancer Center under the direction of Professor Kaplan. Upon his retirement in 1994, Gillian began to work with Professor Alberto Hayek, starting a new lab for pancreatic islet research at the Whittier Institute in La Jolla, California.

Although Gillian's career at UCSD under Professor Kaplan was quite successful, undoubtedly her more important scientific contributions were evident as she entered the field of diabetes research. This was a brand new field for Gillian who, undaunted as always, visited Professor Claes Hellestrom in Sweden, at the time the leading islet research laboratory in Europe, to acquire the background methods then crucial to the type of research being entertained at La Jolla. Her expertise was immediately recognised by her colleagues and soon she became a true scientific partner in the discovery and further development of innovative research approaches to pancreas and islet differentiation and growth.

As can be seen in the more than 100 publications from this lab, Gillian left an imprint on all of them that quickly made her one of the more respected cell biologists in the field. Indeed, the national and international reputation of the lab rest heavily on Gillian's work. She was instrumental in identifying and growing the cells that made it possible to maintain in culture immortalised human beta cell lines from fetal and mature cells. On her own initiative, she led the work on new ways to cryopreserve human islets, identify hepatocyte growth factor as the most important mitogenic agent in human beta cell replication and she was instrumental in several other discoveries, some the base of several patents currently under licensing by biotech companies, as well as eleven book chapters and many invited international presentations.

Up until the last days before her retirement, Gillian was busy with protocols to assess the differentiation of the embryonic cells into insulin-producing cells. Upon her retirement from UCSD, Gillian has been named as a research consultant to the Islet Research Laboratory at the Whittier Institute since her expertise is extremely valuable to the field and to diabetes research in general.

Every student and research fellow that trained in this laboratory was influenced by Gillian. She patiently

taught the uninitiated, improved the experienced and always helped young minds developing their own projects to make them viable for publication.

Gillian's record of first author papers in cutting edge research is quite remarkable considering that she did not follow the normal path of Ph.D. degree research. Anyone who knows her is aware of the level of intellectual excitement, not to say ferment she brings to her research activities.

Gillian has all the attributes of a great researcher: a great mind, superb technical skills and a commitment to pursue new ideas that are so difficult to encounter in a single person. During her 20 years in the lab she provided the best example of what a stellar academic member should be like in an environment where good, solid and reproducible research is the benchmark of excellence.

Chancellor, I have great pleasure in presenting to you, for admission to the degree of Doctor of Science (honoris causa), scholar, educator and great researcher, Gillian Beattie BSc.