

## **Short biography for Professor Dame Lesley Regan DBE, MD, DSc, FRCOG**

I am delighted that the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists has nominated me to stand for re-election as Honorary Secretary of FIGO in 2021. As a Consultant OBGYN for 30 years, I continue to deliver front line care and have many years of experience to offer as a researcher, fundraiser, administrator and campaigner to improve women's health.

### **Career milestones**

1980: MB BS Royal Free Medical School London  
1985: Membership Royal College Obstetricians & Gynaecologists  
1989: MD research thesis: Recurrent pregnancy loss  
1990: Consultant OBGYN & Senior Lecturer St Mary's Hospital London  
1996: Professor & Head Dept OBGYN, Imperial College London  
2009-15: Chair FIGO Women's Sexual & Reproductive Rights Committee  
2014-16: RCOG Vice President Strategic Development  
2015: Doctorate Science: University College London  
2017: Elected US National Academy Medicine, Member human Rights committee  
2016-19: President RCOG  
2018-20: Co-chair UK Women's Health Strategic Task Force  
2018-21: Honorary Secretary FIGO  
2020: Chair of Trustees, Wellbeing of Women Charity

During my training years in London and later Cambridge, I was troubled by the lack of scientific knowledge about the causes of miscarriage – the commonest complication of pregnancy. An MRC training fellowship offered me the opportunity to complete an MD thesis on "Epidemiology and Mechanisms of Sporadic and Recurrent Spontaneous Abortion" before completing my clinical training at Addenbrookes Hospital. In 1990, I was the first woman to be appointed as a consultant in OBGYN at St Mary's Hospital Medical School, London.

In 1996, I was appointed Professor at Imperial College, becoming the only female Head of Department of OBGYN in the UK. I developed the Recurrent Miscarriage clinic which continues to be the largest referral service worldwide - our treatments are evidence-based and have changed practice globally. My team has also made significant contributions to the Fertility, Uterine Fibroid, Reproductive Endocrine and Abortion services.

In 2006, I was elected to the RCOG Council, to represent Sub Saharan Africa for two 3-year terms and later became the inaugural chair of RCOG's Global Advocacy committee. Having been a member of FIGO for many years, I was invited to chair the Women's Sexual and Reproductive Rights Committee in 2009. Over the next 6 years, I developed a web-based teaching program that embedded an understanding of human rights into reproductive healthcare teaching. In 2010, I was able to further develop my interests in global maternal health, being appointed to the Royal Society of Medicine's Global Health Steering Group.

I am convinced that a sustained reduction in global maternal mortality and morbidity can only be achieved by resolving the unmet need for contraception and safe abortion. To achieve these goals, I now recognise the importance of providing clear information and constructive engagement with politicians and the electorates they serve. Above all, we must provide girls and women with the education and tools they need to control their fertility; allowing them to make informed decisions about if, when and how many times they become pregnant.

My career had focussed primarily on alleviating women's illnesses until I was introduced to Sir Michael Marmot's work on the social determinants of disease, which swiftly convinced me that I needed to make a larger contribution to preventative health initiatives. I joined the RCOG working group promoting a life course approach to women's health in 2011, moving the emphasis from disease intervention to preventative health service delivery. I edited the Chief Medical Officer's 2014 annual report "The Health of the 51%," focussing on the health needs of vulnerable women. I secured \$10.5 million from an anonymous US donor, to fund

the RCOG Leading Safe Choices programme to improve the quality and delivery of postpartum contraception and safe abortion services in Sub-Saharan Africa. The success of this model led to continued funding to scale up safe abortion care in further LMIC countries.

In 2016, I became 30th President of the RCOG, only the second woman and the first to be elected in 64 years. In the UK, one of my first tasks was to forge a close partnership with NHS England and the Royal College of Midwives (RCM) to improve maternity safety outcomes. This resulted in funding to establish a National Maternity Improvement Alliance hosted at the new joint RCOG/RCM headquarters. I championed the RCOG global advocacy programme hosting high profile international events to address contentious areas of women's health: Human Rights, Maternal Mental Health, Forced & Child Marriage, Abortion, Domestic Violence & Abuse, Health care for Refugees, Women's Health in Conflict Zones.

The national Women's Health taskforce I was asked to co-chair in 2018, won wide support by focussing on solutions to common problems: unplanned pregnancy, access to contraception, period problems, abortion, menopause, urinary incontinence. This led to the RCOG *Better for Women* report published in December 2019, based on a life-course approach to improve health outcomes while saving money. The report emphasised that when we empower a woman to take charge of her own health, she achieves better outcomes for herself and her family. In short, she becomes a critical part of the solution.

In 2018, I was elected Honorary Secretary of FIGO – the global voice for women's health. My role during 2019-20 focussed on appointing a new CEO and leading a series of crucial governance changes, partly to address legal requirements and comply with UK Charity law, but more importantly to improve the transparency and responsiveness of FIGO's processes. The renamed FIGO Council approved these governance changes unanimously, including proposals for a further 5 Regional Trustees and the adoption of a 2year World Congress cycle and tenure for future Officers and Trustees. This new structure will increase the opportunities for our 140+ member societies to engage and contribute to FIGO's mission.

During the last 16 months we have all experienced unprecedented changes in the way we live and work due to the Covid-19 pandemic. I am proud of the determination with which the FIGO staff and my colleagues have adapted to the challenges and the speed at which they have embraced new ways of virtual working, learning and communicating with each other.

As a result, FIGO Council is meeting virtually every 2 months and receive regular updates from our committees and working groups. I have introduced the circulation of a summary of key items of Council business to all our National Societies to keep them informed and engaged with our activities. Your FIGO Officers now meet every 2 weeks, with the result that we can be much swifter in our responses to requests for help and endorsement from members and external agencies such as Amnesty International, UNFPA, WHO.

As part of our Strategic Planning group, I have played a pivotal role in helping to shape the future direction that FIGO is taking - aiming to improve the health and wellbeing of girls and women across their life course. I firmly believe that this new agenda will allow us to attract more core funding and forge further partnerships with other agencies and organisations.

During the past year, I have enjoyed taking part in many of the high-quality webinars FIGO has delivered on a wide range of women's health topics. These have attracted large global audiences and are available as archival reference material on our website [www.figo.org](http://www.figo.org).

I believe that the next two years will see further benefits both from the governance changes that the FIGO Officers and Council have put in place and from the rapid adoption of more inclusive and less expensive means of communicating with our members.

Most importantly I remain passionately committed to continue to develop the role that FIGO plays in leading the fight to improve the choices open to women and girls throughout their lives – working toward the full achievement of SDG 5 – gender equality by 2030.

*"The health of every nation is determined by the health of its' girls and women".*