

## LIFELINE

**Chris McManus**

*Chris McManus qualified as a doctor, then became an experimental psychologist, and is now professor of psychology at University*

*College London and Imperial College School of Medicine. A foot in each camp makes him an outsider in each, but he nevertheless tries to be an ambassador between psychology and medicine, as by co-editing the forthcoming Cambridge Handbook of Psychology, Health and Medicine.*

**Who was your most influential teacher?** Nick Humphrey, for showing me there is nothing psychology cannot explore, that the hardest of thought is necessary, and evidence comes from unlikely places.

**Which aspect of your work gives you most pleasure?** In front of a computer screen, enthusing with a student over freshly collected data, searching for the sense and meaning.

**Which single medical advance would benefit most people?** Sequencing the genes for humanity and compassion, presumably found on the X-chromosome.

**Which event had most effect on your work?** Peter Richards asking me to collaborate on a study of medical-student selection; 17 years later, many people assume I am genuinely a medical educationist.

**What is your unrealised ambition?** Finding the gene for left-handedness and cerebral language dominance.

**Which alternative profession would you have liked to pursue?** An artist. My evening class is the still centre of a turning world, where seeing something properly for the first time is as close as I'll get to transcendence.

**What would be your advice to a newly qualified doctor?** I'll steal a line of Marshall Marinker's: "Remember every complex problem has a simple solution—and it's wrong."

**Whom do you most admire?** Tony Blair. For doing it.

**What was your biggest mistake?** None, as yet, professionally (except this?); but too many in my personal life.