**Medal of Honour Presentation and Dinner, Wednesday 17 May 2023**

**Medallist: Emeritus Professor Aneez Esmail Presenter: Professor Nalin Thakkar**

Distinguished Guests

It is my great pleasure to present Emeritus Professor Aneez Esmail for the Medal of Honour.

Aneez has had such a distinguished career it is difficult to know where to begin citing his achievements. I suspect he is the only award recipient who has been previously arrested by the police – more on that later!

Aneez served as Professor of General Practice in the Faculty of Biology, Medicine and Health and was a practising clinician at the Robert Darbishire Practice, a social enterprise-based healthcare centre in one of the most deprived areas of Manchester. It is the largest practice in Manchester with over 22,000 registered patients.

Aneez also made significant contributions as a senior manager at the University, steering through critical areas of strategic importance in the post-merger University of Manchester. Aneez was appointed by Professor Alan Gilbert, the then VC, as the University’s first Associate Vice-President for Equality and Diversity in 2005. This resulted in Aneez becoming the University’s most senior BAME member of staff. In this time, he influenced and shaped several key initiatives to tackle race, gender and disability inequalities across the University.

Aneez later became the founding Associate Vice-President for Social Responsibility, working to lead and launch a new strategy and office focused on social responsibility that is now recognised around the world for its impact.

And of course, Aneez served on the University’s Board of Governors and Senate.

Aneez’s work has been devoted to two broad areas: patient safety and fighting racism in the medical profession.

So, first on patient safety.

Aneez successfully led the £6.5m Manchester bid for the NIHR Primary Care Patient Safety Translational Centre and was its inaugural director. He has published widely in the field, including on

* prevention of cot deaths,
* epidemiology of solvent abuse,
* preventing paediatric admissions,
* the evaluation of telemedicine and
* patient safety.

He has raised over £11 million in research grants, £1.4 million in educational grants and over £300,000 in consultancy fees over the last 20 years.

It was in this context that Aneez was thrown into, perhaps, his most high-profile public role as Medical Advisor to Dame Janet Smith, the Appeal Court Judge who chaired the Shipman Inquiry between 2001-2005. It says a lot about Aneez that, when there was widespread concern about doctors marking their own homework in terms of patient safety, it was Aneez who was asked to provide independent and robust challenge to ensure such an incident could never happen again.

Aneez played a key role in developing recommendations that led to significant changes to not only how GMC regulates doctors, but also to several areas of practice.

As I mentioned previously the other area where Aneez has made a significant contribution is in fighting racism in the medical profession.

As a newly qualified graduate, Aneez found that he had to apply for at least 100 jobs to get selected for an interview whilst his white colleagues had to apply for 10 jobs to get an interview. So together with a colleague he decided to test this. He applied for same job twice: once with an English-sounding surname and once again with an Asian-sounding surname. Aneez found that you were twice as likely to get shortlisted with the English-sounding name. On publication of this research, he and his colleague were arrested by the police for fraud and were sanctioned by GMC – for bringing the profession into disrepute! But ultimately this led to significant changes in recruitment, selection, monitoring and assessment of the medical profession. This work was recognised internationally with the award of a Harkness Fellowship in 1997 during which he was a Visiting Professor at Harvard Medical School. He was offered, but in characteristic ant-establishment form, declined an OBE for this work in 2002. Aneez wrote an interesting article on **why** he declined this award, citing the imperial nature of the awards as being incompatible for someone of his own heritage, who were once subjects of the British empire.

In April 2014, Aneez was asked by the Chief Executive of the NHS to develop a mandatory Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES) for the NHS. This was implemented across the NHS from 2015. This was the first time that the NHS has been mandated to have standards related to equality & diversity.

Aneez has received many national and international accolades for his work:

He was commended by the Heath Service Journal, as one of the top 100 Clinical Leaders in the NHS in 2014.

He was also commended as a Black and Minority Pioneer in the NHS in 2013 and 2014.

In November 2017, he was given a lifetime achievement award by the publishers of Pulse Magazine for his contribution to General Practice.

Outside of work Aneez is a passionate advocate for state education and volunteered countless hours of his free time to chair the governing body of Chorlton High School over a period many years.

Aneez would also say, I’m sure, that a lot of his successes have come from the support he’s had from his family – from his parents who had to leave Uganda with a few days’ notice at the height of Idi Amin’s rule with nothing but a suitcase. Through to now, where Aneez will be the first to acknowledge the immense driving force his wife Ariana provides with her commitment to social justice and the love and joy he has had as a father to three children.

Aneez, what you’ve achieved today isn’t just a personal honour. It’s clear that you’ve lifted and inspired others – including myself – who have come after you and benefited from the causes you’ve fought for and changes you’ve made.