



# ROYAL ACADEMY OF MEDICINE IN IRELAND

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**History of Medicine Section**  
**Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> January 2022 at 7pm**  
Online Lecture

## ***The Medical Students from London who went to help at Belsen during the war.***

**Professor Stephen Challacombe, PhD, FDSRCS, FMedSci, DSc, FRC**  
**Kings College, London**



In early April 1945, 96 medical students from the London Schools volunteered to help at Belsen concentration camp. On arrival, they were assigned one of the 80 wooden huts to look after, each of which housed up to 450 starving, ill and emaciated inmates. War to the East continued.

45,000 starving people inside the camp had had no food for weeks and no water for the last week. Typhus and TB were rife. The British Army had buried the bodies but had few inroads into the individual huts. The students set about looking after and delivering food and water to all the surviving inmates. The death rate dropped from 800 a day to below 50 a day within two weeks. The students assisted the inmates to be cleaned and move into a hastily constructed hospital of 14,000 beds. At the end of four weeks the students flew back to Croydon airport, gave back their uniforms, returned to their medical schools, and never met as a group again.

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