

Dr Piero Mastroeni  
MD, PhD, ScD

I come from a small community having grown up on an island about 15 miles North of Sicily, Italy.

I studied Medicine and Surgery at the University of Messina in Sicily, where I graduated and later obtained my fitness-to-practice licence in 1990. While doing my Medical undergraduate course I visited the Department of Pathology at the University of Cambridge, spending a few months in the laboratory of Carlos Hormaeche, a great man, outstanding scientist and superb mentor. I returned to Cambridge in 1991 supported by a European studentship and obtained my PhD in 1994. Those were the early and exciting days when bacterial immunology was budding and our research group achieved many seminal discoveries further fuelling my passion for science.

The research group moved to Newcastle upon Tyne where Carlos was appointed as a Professor and Head of Department of Microbiology. My time in Newcastle was extremely productive and I enjoyed the friendliness and light-hearted attitude of the North of England, in so many ways similar to the environment I was used to back in Sicily.

From 1997 to 1999 I worked at Imperial College in London, being the senior postdoc in the research group of Gordon Dougan, a great mentor and nowadays a good friend. This was a big change in my lifestyle, as I had never lived in a big city. The work at Imperial was a roller coaster of emotions, scientific achievements and new experiences including international collaborations and travel to LMIC.

In 1999 I was offered a lectureship at Cambridge and I decided to come back "home" and set up my research group. I relished the challenge of pursuing independent research, but at the same time I was fearful of the immense task ahead. My work in Cambridge took off and I progressed to a Readership in 2008; I am grateful to all the good students and post-docs that made this possible through their many landmark discoveries. In 2017 I received the Higher Degree of Doctor of Science from the University of Cambridge. I consider this a great honour.

I am the author of over 120 publications and the editor of two books in the field of infection and immunity, vaccine development, autoimmunity, infection dynamics and more recently antibiotics.

There have been hard times and easy times in my work and in my life and therefore not everything has been easy. At times of difficulty I remember Carlos' words of encouragement. He used to say: "life and work are like a pinball machine. You are the ball and you will spend much time bouncing around from difficulty to difficulty. But be sure that this will not go on for ever;..... if you persevere, like the ball eventually finds its way into the drain, you will eventually end up finding success".

I still thoroughly enjoy my research and love to teach and, often informally, mentor younger researchers.

