



The Crofton Award

The Crofton Award was launched by the Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland (REHIS) in partnership with ASH Scotland for the first time in 2009, to recognise the contributions young people in Scotland make towards reducing the harm caused by tobacco. The award is given at the REHIS Annual Awards ceremony held in November each year.

Smoking continues to kill 13,500 people in Scotland every year, and young people have long been a target for the tobacco industry in their desire to recruit new smokers to replace those who quit or die. However, many young people today work together to challenge the might of their industry, often achieving results other organisation cannot through their enthusiasm, commitment, and ability to relate to and communicate with their peers. The unique Crofton Award honours that work and contributes towards the development of new ideas and innovation by and for young people themselves with prize money of £1500 awarded by REHIS.

The Crofton Award is named in honour of Sir John Crofton, and Lady Eileen Crofton, both prolific campaigners against the harm caused by tobacco. Sir John Crofton, born in 1912, was a pioneer in the treatment of tuberculosis. As Professor of Respiratory Diseases and Tuberculosis at the University of Edinburgh from 1952-1977, he is famous for developing a highly effective treatment for TB and insisting that a “100% cure for pulmonary TB is both a reasonable and achievable target”. John reduced TB in Edinburgh to almost zero in six years with his groundbreaking and revolutionary ‘Edinburgh Method’ of treatment with a combination of drugs. His work, leading to the mass vaccination of BCG reduced TB in Britain from 50,000 recorded cases in the 1950s to just 5,500 in 1987.

Sir John also spent more than half his life fighting to raise awareness about the harm caused to public health by tobacco. He argued for policies to control smoking and tobacco and called for smoke-free legislation long before it became law, knowing the important contribution it would make to future public health. John was knighted in 1977. He campaigned tirelessly around TB, tobacco control, and other health issues until his death in November 2009.

Sir John and his wife Dr Eileen Crofton also played a pivotal role in founding ASH Scotland in 1973 with Eileen becoming the first Director, and they remained active members. Dr Eileen Crofton has also worked assiduously to raise awareness about the harm caused by smoking and the need for increased tobacco control. On the issue of smoke-free public places, Eileen said, “The secret was keeping it in the public eye”.

Eileen aimed to promote awareness of the harmful effects of smoking amongst the general population and professional organisations by using the highest standards of accuracy and evidence. Eileen had a particular interest in women's health and set up the ASH Women's Committee in 1984 and remained its convener until 1990. This organisation later developed into the International Network of Women Against Tobacco (INWAT). Eileen has also published on the story of women medics during the First World War.

Eileen was awarded an MBE on her retirement in 1984, and continued to speak and lecture about smoking and campaign for a ban on smoking in public places, both at home and abroad, long afterwards.

When REHIS decided to launch an award for young people in recognition of the achievement of young people in reducing tobacco and smoking-related harm in Scotland they decided to do this in honour of Sir John and Lady Eileen Crofton's tireless work over the decades in tobacco control.