

We are deeply saddened by the death of Dr Paula Heister, Bye-Fellow in Medicine.

Born in Switzerland and raised in Germany, Paula first moved to London aged 13 and fell in love with the UK. After a short spell back in Germany, Paula returned to study Psychology, Philosophy and Physiology at St Hilda's College, Oxford, before moving to New College and completing an M.Sc. and then D.Phil. in pharmacology. Among other activities, Paula became the women's captain of Oxford University Pistol Club and a Blues (first team) athlete, as well as president, of Oxford University Fencing Club (OUFC).

After completing her doctoral research on pancreatic beta cell signalling in diabetes, Paula trained in medicine at Imperial College London, graduating in 2016. As a doctor, Paula's brilliance was in talking to patients and tackling their problems with boundless perseverance; the same gifts made her many circles of friends, whom she rejoiced in bringing together at every opportunity. While working in the NHS, Paula balanced research and teaching, including at Columbia University and Queen Mary, University of London. In 2019 she took a post as a specialty registrar in histology at Cambridge University, and in 2020 began teaching medicine at Downing College. As a committed tutor and mentor, Paula took great joy in sharing her passion and experience, and in seeing her students develop both during and after her tutelage.

Concurrently, Paula followed another long-term ambition and undertook a part-time M.A. in Children's Book Illustration at the Cambridge School of Art (Anglia Ruskin University). With a special flair for printmaking and anthropomorphic animals, Paula was signed by United Talent Agency (UTA), with whom she worked to produce both fiction and non-fiction works for young readers. Paula's artwork was exhibited across the UK, in Bologna and Hamburg, and received recognition from various bodies, including a High Commendation (second place) in the Science & Technology category at the World Illustration Awards (<https://www.paulaheister.com/>). In 2023 Paula married Christopher Jones, a scholar in Buddhist studies. In early 2025, Paula was awarded a fellowship at the Radcliffe Institute of Harvard University; with no knowledge of an impending illness, Paula's aim was to draw upon her expertise as a pathologist and produce a children's book on the science and societal understandings of death.

Although it was cut tragically short by aggressive glioblastoma, Paula lived a vibrant life as a researcher, clinician, artist, and writer, as well as a devoted friend, wife, sister, and daughter. Paula remained a lynchpin of the OUFC community, as well as a committed alumna of St Hilda's College, where she proudly served on the Committee of the Association of Senior Members. She was also enthusiastically involved in volunteer work with children at her local church in Cambridge, Our Lady and the English Martyrs (OLEM). Paula's intelligence, kindness, humour and commitment to individuals and causes close to her heart left indelible marks across colleges, laboratories, hospitals, sports centers, art rooms, churches and more, both in the UK and abroad. Paula is remembered for her incredible talent for weaving together her diverse skills and areas of expertise, but also – by her family, colleagues, and many circles of friends – for her love and talent for bringing people together.

A memorial will be held for Paula in late Summer 2025, location and date TBC. To receive more information, please email [paulaheistermemorial@gmail.com](mailto:paulaheistermemorial@gmail.com).