

Obituary

Pioneering Healthcare Law in the UK: Margaret “Margot” Brazier, OBE

Stephen W Smith 

Cardiff University, School of Law and Politics, Wales, United Kingdom

The United Kingdom lost one of its most towering figures in health law and ethics with the passing of Professor Margaret “Margot” Brazier in March of 2025. Through her scholarship, teaching, mentorship of junior colleagues, editorial role in the *Medical Law Review*, authorship of *Medicine, Patients, and the Law*, and chairing of governmental committees, Margot was one of the most influential — if not *the* most influential — figures in health law and ethics in the United Kingdom for almost forty years. Through her academic rigor, insight, and knowledge, along with an unmatched empathy, wisdom, and collegiality, Margot shaped the field of health law and ethics in the UK profoundly, not just for academics but also for lawyers, healthcare professionals, and policymakers.

Margot began her academic career in 1971 at the University of Manchester. She spent her entire academic career there and has the distinction of being the University of Manchester’s youngest ever professor. In 1986, when the discipline of health law and ethics in the UK was in its infancy, Margot set up the Centre for Social Ethics and Policy (CSEP) with John Harris, Tony Dyson, and Mary Lobjoit. Under their leadership, CSEP became one of the leading research centers on health law and bioethics in the UK, as well as the home of Manchester’s Master’s and PhD programs in Healthcare Law and Ethics. Many of the UK’s current academics within the field of health law and ethics have a connection to Manchester’s programs, either as former students, research fellows, or teachers.

Margot’s research spanned the field of health law and ethics. Her work included topics as diverse as informed consent, the duty of care in medical malpractice, patients’ responsibilities, the criminal process and healthcare, the use of human tissue, and the historical links between medicine and law. She was the Editor-in-Chief of the *Medical Law Review*, the UK’s preeminent journal of health law and ethics, from 2004–2011 and the first female President of the Society of Public Teachers of Law from 1997–1999. She was the author of *Medicine, Patients, and the Law*, a highly regarded textbook on health law for non-lawyers, first on her own, then with Professors Emma Cave and Rob Heywood. In addition to her academic research, she chaired the Animal Procedures Committee from

1993–1998, the Review of Surrogacy Arrangements Committee from 1996–1998, the Retained Organs Commission from 2001–2004, and the Nuffield Council on Bioethics Working Party on Critical Care Decisions in Fetal and Neonatal Medicine: Ethical Issues from 2004–2006. She received an OBE (Order of the British Empire) in 1997, was made an honorary Queen’s (now King’s) Counsel in 2008, and was became a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts in 1994, the Academy of Medical Sciences in 2007 and the British Academy in 2014. In 2024, the Society of Legal Scholars created the Margaret Brazier book prize for Outstanding Legal Scholarship in her honor, and she was also awarded the Ted Shotter Lifetime Recognition medal for endeavor in medical ethics from the Institute of Medical Ethics.

Even so, Margot will be remembered most not for her achievements by those who had the pleasure of knowing her. Instead, her kindness, collegiality, and generosity will be forefront in their thoughts. Margot was invariably interested in her colleagues and friends. While she took special responsibility for nurturing and mentoring female colleagues, she provided advice and support to all who requested it. Her advice and insight were exceptional, and the world of UK health law and ethics is a much kinder and thoughtful place due to her leadership and example. This is no clearer than the descriptions of her given by colleagues and friends in the special edition of the *Medical Law Review* in her honor published in 2012 and the festschrift entitled *Pioneering Healthcare Law: Essays in Honour of Margaret Brazier* published in 2016. She was a loving wife to Rodney, her husband of fifty years, and a loving mother to her daughter Vicky.

In short, Margot Brazier has been the heart and soul of health law and ethics in the United Kingdom for a very long time and it is better as a result. She leaves behind not only a legacy of academic work but a legion of friends, colleagues, and mentees. We can only hope we can continue to follow her example as we move on in her absence.

Stephen W. Smith is a Reader in Medical Law and Ethics at the School of Law and Politics at Cardiff University in Wales, United Kingdom.

Email: smiths55@cardiff.ac.uk

Cite this article: S.W. Smith. “Pioneering Healthcare Law in the UK: Margaret ‘Margot’ Brazier, OBE,” *Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics* (2025): 1. <https://doi.org/10.1017/jme.2025.10180>