

## Francis Hopkins

**Born:** 1752

**President:** 1785-1786, 1792-1793, 1798-1799, 1803-1804, 1810-1811, 1815-1816

**Died:** 1819

Francis Hopkins was born in Davidstown, County Meath in 1752, the son of Francis Hopkins, and was described as a gentleman of means. He entered Trinity College Dublin at the age of 17 on 8 July 1769 where his educator was listed as Dr French and his tutor M O'Connor. He graduated with a BA in 1773 and went on to obtain an MD from Edinburgh in 1777.

He was elected a physician to the Meath Hospital on 22 June 1781 and resigned this post on being elected a physician to Mercer's Hospital on 7 April 1785. Clinical teaching was then in its infancy and the governors of Mercer's agreed to set aside beds for the College of Physicians and Trinity College in 1786. However, Hopkins 'in a fit of the spleen he frustrated the negotiation' and the initiative failed.<sup>1</sup> Hopkins' decision was influenced by his unsuccessful application for the post of King's Professor and his undoubted interest in obstetrics.

He was Assistant Master at the Rotunda Hospital from 1789 to 1792 and was elected Master from 1807 to 1814. During his Mastership, the Board of Governors applied to Parliament to set up a fund for the instruction of female pupils and four were subsequently admitted. Two issues dominated his Mastership, the want of trained midwives and overcrowding - how these issues would resonate with today's Masters! However, the overcrowding issue was so acute for Hopkins that the Board of Governors were compelled to give up the Card room to provide extra space. He was responsible for the delivery of 18,727 babies during his time as Master with a maternal mortality rate of 1.1%.

Hopkins was the first practitioner in midwifery to be conferred with the Licentiate in Medicine by the College of Physicians on 1 November 1779 and he was soon elected to Fellowship on 17 April 1780. He served as President six times between 1785 and 1816. He took this role very seriously and dedicated a considerable amount of time to it. He assumed the role of Dun's Librarian from 9 April 1819 until his death on 18 October 1819. He was survived by his sons, Francis Hopkins and Rev James Hopkins.

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<sup>1</sup> John Benigus Lyons, *The quality of Mercer's: The story of Mercer's Hospital, 1734-1991* (Dublin: Glendale, 1991), 59

