

Frank Fenner

Helped eradicate smallpox

The Australian virologist Frank Fenner once said that his proudest moment came in Geneva in 1970, when, as chairman of the Global Commission for the Certification of Smallpox Eradication, he declared its mission accomplished. "It was a terrific thrill to be involved in a programme that in 10 years removed from the Earth a disease that, at the time we started, was credited with 20 million cases and two million deaths every year," he said in 2002, on accepting the prime minister's prize for science in Australia.

Fenner was also acclaimed for his scientific work on the myxoma virus, which contributed to the biological control of the rabbit plague that had decimated Australian farming land in the early 1950s. He first caught the attention of the general public with an unorthodox experiment in 1951. In an effort to reassure those anxious about the safety of releasing myxomatosis, Fenner and two colleagues injected themselves with the virus. They experienced only slight reddening at the site of the injection.

Controlling malaria

Fenner first became interested in infectious diseases while a captain and then a major in the Australian Army Medical Corps between 1940 and 1946, during service in Australia, Palestine, Egypt, New Guinea, and Borneo. His work in controlling malaria among troops during the second world war earned him the recognition of a Member of the Order of the British Empire in 1945.

After the war, he worked alongside Sir Frank Macfarlane Burnet at the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute for Medical Research in Melbourne, where he studied mousepox, a close relative of the smallpox virus. It was the beginning of a lifelong interest in pox viruses. Fenner's work on myxomatosis also led him into the study of the vaccinia virus, which was useful background for the work on smallpox.

Fenner, who died on 22 November at age 95, continued to attend his office at the Australian National University (ANU) in Canberra for 30 years after his official retirement. His appointments included foundation professor of microbiology in 1949; director of the John Curtin School of Medical Research in 1967; and founding director of the Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies in 1973.

Fenner was widely celebrated, not only for the breadth of his scientific achievement, but for his



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prolific writing: he published more than 300 scientific papers and wrote or contributed to many books, including a best selling textbook, *Medical Virology*, and his autobiography, *Nature, Nurture and Chance: The Lives of Frank and Charles Fenner*.

On the day after his death, Prime Minister Julia Gillard told parliament that he had been "one of Australia's greatest scientists and a man of exceptional integrity, modesty, and generosity of spirit."

An ANU colleague and friend, Professor Stephen Boyden, a human ecologist, told the *BMJ*, "He was a workaholic and used to get to work by about 6 am every morning, and so got three hours work done before the rest of us turned up.

"Bringing information together and communicating it was one of his great strengths. The other thing about Frank is how extraordinarily calm he was, really unflappable. He would always sit down and listen and encourage people."

After becoming director of the John Curtin School at the ANU, Fenner decided to stop scientific research because he didn't want to do it through assistants or students. He once told a radio interviewer, "I am temperamentally unable to do research without being personally involved, hands-on at the bench." Serendipitously, this allowed him to answer the critical call of his career: to help the World Health Organization to rid the world of smallpox transmission, a task that required a grinding schedule of constant travel.

In later decades, Fenner's focus turned to environmental problems. Fenner was known as a cautious scientist but had no hesitation in sharing his alarm about global warming. "You couldn't but be very concerned," he said during a 2007 interview.

"Everybody that lectures on climate change has to end up on a hopeful note, so I try to avoid giving lectures on it because I find it very gloomy."

Human extinction

In an interview with the Australian newspaper earlier this year, Fenner predicted that climate change would bring about the extinction of many species including humans ("Frank Fenner sees no hope for humans," 16 Jun 2010, www.theaustralian.com.au/higher-education/frank-fenner-sees-no-hope-for-humans/story-e6frcjx-1225880091722). He said, "We'll undergo the same fate as the people on Easter Island . . . It's an irreversible situation. I think it's too late."

Fenner was similarly upfront about his political convictions. He had never voted for the conservative parties, he said, preferring to support the "underdog." He often paid tribute to his father, Charles Fenner, and his wife Ellen Margaret Bobbie Roberts; Bobbie was a nurse whom he met in 1943 and who died in 1995. During his last official public engagement, at the first international meeting on translational medicine held at the ANU in November, he received a standing ovation.

Fenner wrote and carried an advanced care directive. "It says, 'If I am found unconscious on the road, don't do anything to revive me,'" he said in 2007. "I don't want to live for a long time. I want a quick death." He died after being admitted to hospital with septicæmia. He leaves a daughter.

Melissa Sweet

Frank John Fenner, virologist (b 1914; q 1938, University of Adelaide), died on 22 November 2010.

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John Philip Russell Campbell

Former general practitioner
Chesterfield, Derbyshire (b 1931;
q Durham 1955; DRCOG, MRCP), died
from congestive heart failure on
15 September 2010.

John Philip Russell Campbell did
a short commission in the Royal
Navy with the Fishery Protection
Squadron as surgeon lieutenant.
He was a general practitioner in
Northumberland for seven years
before joining Ash Lodge Medical
Centre, Chesterfield, in 1968, where
he remained until retirement in 1993.
He was a member of Derbyshire
Local Medical Committee and was
occupational health physician
at Chesterfield Royal Hospital. In
retirement he spent many enjoyable
days on Matlock Golf Club's course
until ill health forced him to stop. He
is survived by his wife, Zandra; three
children; and five grandchildren.

Iain Serrell

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2010;341:c6772



David Robert Harvey was instrumental
in setting up GLADD, the Gay and
Lesbian Association of Doctors and
Dentists, in 1995, and was director of
the Terrence Higgins Trust. Appointed
consultant in neonatal medicine
at Queen Charlotte's and Chelsea
Hospital, London, in 1970, he oversaw
the merger with Hammersmith
Hospital and later incorporation with
Imperial College. He was paediatrician
at the confinements of Princess
Anne and the Princess of Wales. He
championed research in areas then
considered irrelevant, and was an
educator, socialist, Buddhist, bon
vivante, polymath, and, above all,
advocate for mothers and babies.
Predeceased by his long term partner,
Teck Ong, in 2004, he leaves a cousin,
Anthony Stranger-Jones, who cared for
him during his final years.

Neena Modi

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2010;341:c6773

Prafulla Kumar Ganguli

Former radiologist East Glamorgan
Hospital, Pontypridd (b 1925; q Calcutta;
DMRD, DMRT, FRCR), d 5 April 2009.
Prafulla Kumar Ganguli obtained the
DMRD (Liverpool) in 1953 and DMRT
(Liverpool) in 1954 before coming
to Britain in 1958 with only £75 in
his pocket. He trained in radiology
in Liverpool and worked in Burnley,
Lancashire, and at Llwynypia Hospital
in the Rhondda Valley before coming
to East Glamorgan Hospital in 1962,
retiring in 1990. Prafulla published
a textbook, *Radiology of Bone and
Joint Tuberculosis*, in 1964. He was
a member of the British Institute of
Radiology for more than 50 years, first
joining in 1953. Outside radiology
he had few interests and lived quietly
in his retirement years. He was
predeceased by his wife, Manjula, in
1998. There were no children.

Stephen G Davies

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2010;341:c6867

David Robert Harvey

Emeritus professor of paediatrics and
neonatal medicine Imperial College
London (b 1936; q Guy's Hospital,
London, 1960), died from Parkinson's
disease on 10 April 2010.



Former consultant radiologist St Mary's
Hospital, London (b 1929; q Westminster
Hospital, London, 1952; FRCR, FRCR),
died from Parkinson's disease and
abdominal lymphoma on 24 February
2010.

After national service in Germany
and several hospital posts in
general medicine, John Hirsch
Highman ("Hirsch") specialised
in radiology, training at St Mary's
Hospital in Paddington, where
he was subsequently consultant.
His interests included paediatric
and gynaecological radiology and
ultrasonography, and he helped

to set up digital communication of
radiological information for St Mary's
Hospital Group. A keen photographer,
Hirsch enjoyed printing the negatives
in his darkroom, and several of them
were included in English Heritage's
photographic archive of listed
buildings. He had a fine musical
ear and a wide ranging musical
knowledge, continuing regular piano
lessons throughout his illness. He
leaves a wife, Wilma; two children;
and two grandchildren.

Wilma Highman

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2010;241:c6868

Siddig Ahmed Ismail

Former director of postgraduate medical
studies University of Khartoum, Sudan
(b 1936; q Khartoum, Sudan, 1959;
FRCR, FAAC), d 13 September 2010.
Siddig Ahmed Ismail graduated from
Khartoum with the highest prize
awarded to a graduate. He trained
at Bristol and St George's Hospital
at Hyde Park Corner, London, in the
1960s, specialising in cardiology
at Hammersmith and Middlesex
Hospitals and in Sweden. He returned
to Sudan to pioneer cardiology,
educating many eminent doctors
currently practising in Sudan and
internationally. His clinical acumen
was outstanding, some of his students
joking that his stethoscope was more
reliable than echocardiography. He
secured international recognition
for the local medical doctorate,
and, because of his wisdom and
fairness, was also the only permanent
member of Khartoum University's
promotions and staff appointments
committee. Predeceased by his wife
in 2006, he leaves four children and a
granddaughter.

Khalid Elmalik

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2010;341:c6871

Ramaiah Sampangi Ramaiah

Director of public health Walsall
Teaching Primary Care Trust and Walsall
Borough Council (b 1948; q Bangalore
1972; DTCD, FRCR, FFPH), died from
sudden and massive coronary ischaemia
on 6 September 2010.
After junior doctor posts in Wales,
Ramaiah Sampangi Ramaiah ("Sam")
flourished in public health medicine
with his easy manner and natural



talent for leadership. He became
district medical officer in South
Tees, and in 1993 was appointed
Walsall's first director of public
health. He held this post with great
distinction, establishing a unique
style of leadership, making hundreds
of friends in the health and local
authorities and beyond, and running a
department that led the efforts of both
health and local authorities to reduce
inequalities and improve health. He
was made visiting professor of health
and wellbeing by Wolverhampton
University in 2009. He leaves a wife,
Jyothi, and two children.

Jammi Nagaraj Rao

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2010;341:c6870

CORRECTION

Graham Edward Schofield

When retyping this obituary for
Graham Edward Schofield submitted
by Anne D Schofield, his wife (*BMJ*
2010;341:c5576, print publication
16 October, p 833), some errors and
omissions occurred. Mr Schofield was
consultant surgeon at Law Hospital,
Lanarkshire (not "Victoria Infirmary,
Glasgow"). He was appointed
consultant surgeon in general surgery
at Law Hospital in 1964. In 1966 he
was seconded by Glasgow University
to the University of East Africa to take
charge of the teaching of surgery at
the extension of Makerere Medical
School in Nairobi for three months
(not "He was appointed consultant
surgeon in general surgery at the
extension of Makere Medical School
in Nairobi for three months"). We
should perhaps also have included
something from the following two
sentences that were omitted during
retyping: "He took an active interest
in the Christian Medical Fellowship
over many years, and was an elder
in his church for over 40 years until
he became unwell in 1997 with a
neurological illness, borne with his
customary dignity and patience." We
apologise for the distress caused to
family and friends through our error.