Christopher Berkeley (“Kit”) Wynn Parry

Rheumatologist who specialised in hand injuries and performing arts medicine

Christopher Berkeley Wynn Parry, consultant in rehabilitation and rheumatology (b 1924; q Oxford 1947; MA, DM Oxf, DPhysMed Eng, FRCP, FRCS), died from a heart attack on 24 February 2015.

When as a young medical graduate Kit Wynn Parry found out that the Royal Air Force was looking for recruits for the new specialty of physical medicine, he jumped at the chance. As a student during the second world war he had missed out on active service and, like many of his peers, was keen to serve.

The specialty emerged during the war to enable pilots—who were expensive to train and in short supply—to quickly return to active service after injury. Physical medicine, later known as rehabilitation, was new and exciting, “a young man’s specialty,” as Wynn Parry described it.

Wynn Parry had started to specialise in rheumatology at John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford, where he had worked for Herbert Seddon, professor of orthopaedic surgery. Seddon had done some early work classifying nerve injuries, their treatment, and neuropathic pain.

Wynn Parry developed this interest when he joined the combined services rehabilitation units at Headley Court and Chessington in Surrey in 1948. He became an expert on the treatment of hand injuries—largely self taught as there was nothing in the medical literature. He soon remedied this with his first book, Rehabilitation of the Hand, which was published in 1958.

Wynn Parry described the rehabilitation service as a “dynamic, progressive, integrated programme,” with a workshop where patients could rehabilitate their hands as part of their treatment but also keep their skills up to date. The unit started as an orthopaedic service but, with British forces in military operations all over the world in the 1950s, it expanded to take in patients with rheumatological and neurological disorders, as well as head injuries.

Collaborative approach

The pioneers of this new specialty worried that the unit was seen as a luxury—Headley Court, a former country residence, was located in the glorious Surrey Hills—so Wynn Parry documented and wrote up a lot of his work, including a review of 1723 cases of meniscectomy, and more than 500 cases of fractured fibula and tibia.

Wynn Parry worked closely with civilian surgeons, who would send him their cases for rehabilitation. This collaboration culminated in a book, Surgical Disorders of the Peripheral Nerves, which was an update of an earlier work by Seddon. In 1982 he served as president of the British Society for Surgery of the Hand—the only non-surgeon ever to have held the post.

When he left the Royal Air Force (RAF) after 27 years’ service, he went to the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital, in north London, as director of rehabilitation. The pioneering work he had introduced to the RAF was now implemented in the NHS.

Wynn Parry developed charts for the measurement and recording of hand functions and recovery of sensation, as well as developing sensory retraining for the hand after nerve injury—one of the first to work in this area. He also expanded the rehabilitation unit, establishing a team that included physiotherapists, occupational therapists, and specialist nurses.

He established another close knit team in his final job at the King Edward VII Hospital in Midhurst, West Sussex, which he described as the happiest place he had ever worked in. This love of his professional family was perhaps a reaction to his own childhood. His parents divorced when he was four, and as a young child he spent a lot of time with his maternal grandfather, the celebrated Leeds surgeon Lord Berkeley Moynihan.

He went to prep school and then Eton, which at the time was not known as a training ground for doctors. When he told his housemaster that he wanted to pursue a career in medicine the housemaster replied: “Old Etonians either go into the City or the 60th Rifles.”

After Eton, Wynn Parry went to Oxford, where he was in the second intake at the John Radcliffe Hospital. His frustration at not being able to join up was alleviated somewhat by the opportunity to treat war casualties. “I remember not seeing my bed for three days and three nights and loving every minute of it. A wonderful experience,” he said.

While at Oxford he indulged his lifelong love of music, playing trombone in a jazz band, as well as singing in a choir. This passion and his medical knowledge converged beautifully when he met the conductor Charles Mackerras (later Sir), whose sister in law was an RAF physiotherapist. Wynn Parry and Mackerras later became neighbours in south west London, and Wynn Parry would attend musical soirees at the conductor’s house. Knowing of Wynn Parry’s medical interests, musicians would consult him about the aches and pains in their hands and arms after their performance and his reputation soon spread.

He became involved with an organisation that eventually became the British Association for Performing Arts Medicine, running clinics for musicians up until he was 89. He applied the same rigour to his voluntary work after retiring as he did to his RAF and NHS service.

He studied 600 musicians, finding that around 20% of problems had a psychological cause, with neither a break nor proper warm up. A further 20% of problems had a psychological cause, such as severe stage fright.

With the surgeon Ian Winspur, he wrote The Musician’s Hand, which included contributions from musicians such as the classical guitarist John Williams, one of many renowned musicians whom Wynn Parry treated. The book was intended for doctors as well as musicians and teachers, hoping to educate them about the importance of warm up and proper rest.

Wynn Parry’s wife, Lamorna, a physiotherapist, predeceased him by six weeks. He leaves a son and two daughters.

Anne Gulland, London

References are in the version on thebmj.com

Cite this as: BMJ 2015;350:h1971
Alban Avelino John Barros D’Sa

Consultant surgeon Walsgrave Hospital, Coventry, and St Cross Hospital, Rugby (b 1937; q Bristol 1967; MRCS, FRCS Ed, FRCS Eng), died from bronchopneumonia on 24 January 2015. Alban Avelino John Barros D’Sa wanted to become a doctor from the age of 5 but had to prioritise his family’s needs and become a teacher. He arrived in London in 1960 and started his medical degree in Bristol in 1962. In 1971 he met Gwenda Davies, a primary school teacher, whom he married in 1972. Alban was appointed consultant surgeon in 1979 in Coventry and Rugby. He concentrated on laparoscopic, upper gastrointestinal, thyroid, and parathyroid surgery. After retiring from the NHS on his 65th birthday he continued in private practice until 2008. Alban died after a short acute illness while on holiday in the Caribbean with Gwenda. He leaves two children (both doctors) and grandchildren.

Sonia H Barros D’Sa, Ian J Barros D’Sa

Cite this as: BMJ 2015;350:h2455

Kenneth Alfred Kingsley North

Consultant physician, endocrinologist, and medical unit director Wellington Hospital, New Zealand, and Royal Berkshire Hospital, Reading (b 1930; q Otago 1954; DPhil Oxon 1957, FRCP Lon 1960, FRACP 1964), died from Alzheimer’s disease on 22 January 2015. Kenneth Alfred Kingsley North (“Ken”) spent eight years in the UK before returning to his native New Zealand in 1962, to take up the appointment of medical tutor and later consultant physician at Wellington Hospital. He returned to the UK in 1972 with a wife, four children, and no secure job. His first post was as locum registrar at Hampstead General Hospital. He quickly obtained a consultant appointment at the Royal Berkshire Hospital. In his retirement he took up farming in North Devon in the 1980s before returning to Nelson, New Zealand, in 1999. He leaves his wife, Katherine; four children; and nine grandchildren.

Andrew Perry

Cite this as: BMJ 2015;350:h2456

Marko Petrovic

Consultant in communicable disease control Greater Manchester Centre, Public Health England (b 1963; q Barts 1986; FRCS, FFPHM), died from cancer of the prostate on 13 March 2015. Marko Petrovic became a consultant in communicable disease control in Greater Manchester. His great passion was tuberculosis, and he developed a deep and expert knowledge on all aspects of the disease. He worked tirelessly with clinicians, nurses, and epidemiologists across the country to reduce the incidence of TB, improve patient care, and control outbreaks. In recent years he undertook research for an MD into the immunology of TB. Although ill health meant he was unable to complete his thesis, he published several papers that have advanced understanding of the disease. He was diagnosed with an aggressive prostate cancer in the summer of 2013. He leaves his wife, Danica; a son; and a daughter.

Aidan McFarlane

Cite this as: BMJ 2015;350:h2473

Longer versions are on thebmj.com. Please give a contact telephone number, and email the obituary to obituaries@bmj.com.