

Obituaries

Dame Cicely Saunders

Founder of the modern hospice movement

Cicely Saunders founded the first modern hospice and, more than anybody else, was responsible for establishing the discipline and the culture of palliative care. She introduced effective pain management and insisted that dying people needed dignity, compassion, and respect, as well as rigorous scientific methodology in the testing of treatments.

St Christopher's Hospice opened in south west London in 1967. It is now one of many but is still the leader in the field. It was her personal achievement and has been imitated all over the world. She raised the funds for the hospice and contributed some of her own money.

Saunders introduced the idea of "total pain," which included the physical, emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions of distress. A good listener, she paid systematic attention to patient narratives. One St Christopher's patient, transferred from another hospital, said, "They used to see how long I could go without an injection. I used to be pouring with sweat because of the pain. I couldn't speak to anyone and I was having crying fits. I think I've only cried once since I've been here . . . The biggest difference is feeling so calm. I don't get worked up or upset."

Cicely Mary Strode Saunders was born in Barnet, Hertfordshire, in 1918. She was sent to Roedean School when she was 10. Taller than the other girls, she felt she never fitted in, which, she said, gave her a feeling for people who were outsiders. She also suffered from a painful and slightly crooked spine, and was made to lie flat on the floor for 40 minutes a day.

Her father disapproved of her desire to be a nurse, and so instead she went to study at Oxford. After the outbreak of the second world war she abandoned her course and defied her parents' advice, enrolling as a student nurse at St Thomas' Hospital in 1944. However, her back was still painful, and she was advised to quit nursing. After returning to Oxford for a year she gained a "war degree" and qualified as a social worker, or what was then called a lady almoner, in 1947.

Saunders was originally an agnostic, but, while on holiday in Cornwall with some



Christian friends, she discovered she believed in God. It was, she said, "as if a switch had flipped."

A year later, during her work as an almoner, at Archway Hospital, she cared for a dying 40 year old Polish Jewish émigré called David Tasma. In a brief and intense relationship—which probably amounted to a spiritual love affair—they discussed the idea that she might found a home for dying people to find peace in their final days. He left her £500, then a substantial sum, and the prophecy "I'll be a window in your home." There is now a window dedicated to him at St Christopher's.

David Tasma's death coincided with the death of Cicely Saunders' father and that of a close friend, and she fell into a state of "pathological grief." She felt that, at last, she knew what God had called her to do, which was to build a home for dying people, where scientific knowledge should be combined with care and love.

Saunders was advised by a surgeon that people wouldn't listen to her as a nurse, that doctors desert the dying, and that she could best help dying patients by becoming a doctor. She was accepted as a medical student at St Thomas' Hospital aged 33.

After qualifying, she obtained a research scholarship at St Mary's Hospital, Paddington, where she studied pain management in the incurably ill, and at the same time worked at St Joseph's, a hospice for the dying poor in Bayswater, run by nuns. Here she used her medical expertise and research findings to help the nuns improve their standard of care.

In 1960, at St Joseph's, she met Antoni Michniewicz, the second of the three Polish men who influenced her life. Again, they had a close spiritual relationship.

At the same time she devoted herself to her cause and by late 1959 she had drawn up a 10 page proposal for a hospice. She initially wanted it to be a Church of England hospice, but several grant-giving organisations required her to make it open to people of all faiths, so she modified the plan. Building work started in 1965.

The hospice contained 54 inpatient beds. There were plans for those who needed respite care, and for a home care service. The first patient was admitted in 1967. The hospice soon extended its activities to research, and added a study centre. By 1970 the NHS contributed two-thirds of the running costs, and NHS doctors undertook part of their specialist training there.

In 1963, three years after the death of Antoni Michniewicz, Cicely Saunders met another Polish man, who was to become her husband, Marian Bohusz-Szysko. He had a long-estranged wife in Poland, whom he supported, and he was a devout Catholic. Marian's wife died in 1975, and in 1980 he married Cicely; she was 61 and he was 79. He predeceased her. They both spent their last days at St Christopher's. [CAROLINE RICHMOND]

Cicely Mary Strode Saunders, medical director St Christopher's Hospice 1967-85 (b Barnet, Hertfordshire, 1918; q St Thomas' Hospital, London, 1957; OM, DBE, FRCP), died from breast cancer on 14 July 2005.

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Thomas Ballantyne Begg



Retired consultant physician Victoria Infirmary, Glasgow (b 20 April 1928; q Glasgow 1950; TD, FRCP), died from myelodysplastic syndrome on 6 March 2005.

Thomas Ballantyne Begg undertook early work on breathalysers and studied mechanisms contributing to coronary and peripheral vascular disease. He was a general physician with an interest in cardiology, and treated patients in one of the early coronary care units. After national service in west Africa he was in the Territorial Army for 18 years, latterly as lieutenant colonel. He was a former chairman of the Glasgow division of the BMA and a church elder. He leaves a wife, Dorothy; three children; and nine grandchildren. [D WARD]

Mark Fernell



General practitioner Birmingham (b 1954; q Liverpool 1977), died from a brain tumour on 18 June 2005.

Mark went into general practice soon after qualifying, building up his surgery from its humble origins in a semi-detached house. His medical knowledge was immense, and colleagues would refer to this intelligence as the "size of the planet Jupiter." He had a disdain for people and bureaucracy that interfered with his ability to deliver optimal care. Before cholesterol lowering drugs had become the accepted treatments that they are now, he was investigated by Whitehall officials for his excessive spending on such drugs. Time has vindicated him. Mark would routinely turn up at work in shorts and sandals, even in winter. He leaves a wife, Jacqui, and three children. [ANDREW WIJNBERG]

William James Hay

Consultant physician Lancaster and Kendal Hospitals 1950-78 (b Liverpool 1913; q Cambridge/Liverpool 1938; FRCP), died on 18 March 2005 following a stroke.



Bill volunteered for the Royal Army Medical Corps in 1939. In 1944 he was awarded the Military Cross after twice evacuating casualties under heavy tank and mortar fire. He was appointed a consultant physician in Lancaster and Kendal in 1950. For 10 years after he retired from clinical work he chaired a capital planning group at the North West Regional Health Authority. He was also involved as board chairman in the establishment and development of St John's Hospice, Lancaster. Predeceased by his wife, Joyce, he leaves two children. [GEORGE TURNBULL, JOHN HAY]

Katharine Neil Maxwell (née Brittain)



Former consultant child and adolescent psychiatrist Wakefield (b Glasgow 1917; q Glasgow 1945), died from ischaemic heart disease on 23 May 2005.

After house jobs in Glasgow Katharine worked in the blood transfusion service before entering a career in child and adolescent psychiatry in Yorkshire. She had an extensive number of interests outside medicine, including flying and sailing, and she took a diploma in aviation medicine at the age of 59 years. Although born in Glasgow, her family roots were in Argyllshire, and throughout her life she maintained contact with Ardrishaig on the west coast of Scotland. Her husband, Roy, predeceased her. [IAN W CAMPBELL]

Bala Krishna Hareendran Nair

Former professor of dermatology and venerology Trivandrum, India (b 1933; q Trivandrum 1957; BSc, DCH, FRCP), died from prostate cancer on 3 July 2004.

Hareendran Nair trained in dermatology in London and Cambridge. After his return to India he joined the health service and became a professor in the medical college hospitals in Kerala. His special field of interest was acarology, and he was considered an expert in scabies and had written many

articles on it. After retirement he continued to be a visiting consultant and practised until he succumbed to his illness. He leaves a wife, Vijaya; three children; and three grandchildren. [HARI SUGUNENDRAN]

Robert D Romanis



Former general practitioner Kensington (b 1925; q St Thomas' Hospital, London, 1952; MA), d 1 April 2004.

Robert was an unusual but successful general practitioner. He studied history at Cambridge and left to join the army in 1943, serving in Europe in the Welsh Guards. Demobbed in 1945, he completed his degree and started further study in music. But times being hard, he took parental advice and qualified at St Thomas' in 1952. After residencies he settled in Kensington for the next 30 years, developing a special interest in mothers and children. He also established a wide range of outside interests, including writing two published novels and medical works, one on depression. In the 1960s he joined the Institute of Directors' medical screening unit. He leaves a wife, Elizabeth. [H BERIC WRIGHT]

Michael Heinz Salz



Orthopaedic surgeon Plymouth 1948-81 (b Breslau, Germany, 1916; q Cambridge/London 1940; FRCS), d 17 June 2005.

Michael Salz was the second orthopaedic surgeon to be appointed in Plymouth and was the main orthopaedic surgeon for west Devon and east Cornwall in the second half of the last century. His interest in orthopaedic surgery was vast and he established friendships with many leaders of orthopaedic surgery throughout the world. He was one of the founders of the Rheumatoid Arthritis Surgical Society and was a member of the Orthopaedic Ski Club and the Hand Club, later the British Society for Surgery of the Hand. Michael was a good skier. He leaves a wife, Veronica (Bunty); two children; and six grandchildren. [MAHER HALAWA]