John A J Macleod

Rural doctor and world expert on island health care

Dr John Macleod and his father before him served the Hebridean island community of North Uist for 77 years. His death marks the ending of an iconic style of UK rural general practice. He had an international reputation as the world’s expert on island health care.

Sir John Dewar MP chaired the Highlands and Islands Medical Service report that was the world’s first government inquiry into rural health care delivery, published in 1912. His recommendations to constitute an essential general practice service to tackle rural deprivation were not implemented until 1932, when John’s parents arrived on North Uist with some certainty of income despite the island’s poverty. The Highlands and Islands Medical Service became the template for the establishment of NHS general practice by the postwar government in 1948.

John was born three years after his parents moved to North Uist and went to Lochmaddy Primary School before secondary school in Stornoway and Keil School, Glasgow. He studied medicine at the University of Glasgow and enjoyed the newfound freedoms, social life, and rugby in the city. He graduated in 1963, with national service with the Royal Navy minesweepers as intercalated life experience. House jobs in Glasgow were followed by teaching hospitals in London, where he gained a perspective in tertiary care.

The Macleod basket

The doctor’s wee boy returned to his island with his wife Lorna after 10 years of hospital experience, as Dr John. His parents had been instrumental in setting up the early days of the air ambulance service in Scotland, with Midland and Scottish Air Ferries in 1933. There was no airstrip or facilities, so John’s mother was famous for “the Macleod basket” of provisions that she would bring to the air crew. John continued the hamper tradition in his early years until an airstrip and terminal building were built.

In 1973 John joined his father as a partner in the general practice until his father retired the following year. In his early years in practice he was single handed and ran the local cottage hospital and dispensing in his practice. He also covered the island of Berneray. He had a traditional style of general practice, backed up by detailed knowledge of the generations.

He had high clinical and personal standards, which quickly earned him respect by the community in his own right. He enjoyed visiting elderly people at home and always shook them by the hand to consider hypothermia as part of his initial assessment. He would set the peat fire in the grate if needed before leaving the house. He was well known for telephoning and demanding action on behalf of his islanders in city hospitals.

John’s multiple duties included being police surgeon. He was called to the bodies of drowned young fisherman from his community and observed a pattern that their flies were open.

He felt angry that they had “been dying for a pee” over the stern of the boat and started a 23 year campaign to introduce personal flotation devices to the fishing industry. He wrote letters to government, newspapers, and politicians and spoke personally to visiting fishermen. He had to endure personal criticism for his dogged perseverance but was rewarded with a lifetime achievement award from Fishing News in 2007.

In 1989 John became seriously ill with a rare tick borne sheep encephalitis called “louping ill” and had to be airlifted by the air ambulance service that his parents had started.

In 1992 John attended the conference of the World Organization of National Colleges and Academic Associations of General Practitioners (WONCA) and felt there was little relevance to his remote practice so he became a founder member of the WONCA rural group, which has organised regular rural conferences, policy initiatives, and a journal.

Hebridean generosity

John published widely on medicine, island life, and natural history. He became a famous international ambassador for Scottish general practice with his Hebridean generosity and kilt. He took his island to the world and then invited the world to his island.

When his father arrived on the island in 1932 a local crofter brought a gift of a trailer load of peats for the fire in welcome. In 2002 the crofter’s granddaughter returned to the island and John turned up with a trailer full of peats on the first night in her new home to welcome them back.

He retired from practice in 2000 but remained active in WONCA and gave the keynote address on island health at their Crete meeting in June 2009.

He left his wife, Lorna, who was also his practice nurse, and three children.

James D M Douglas

John A J Macleod, island doctor (b 1935; q Glasgow 1963), died 2 September 2009 after cardiac surgery. Cite this as: BMJ 2009;339:b4296
Syed Irfan Ahmed

General practitioner Blackpool (b 1950; q Dow Medical College, Pakistan, 1976; MRCP), died from multiorgan failure on 17 September 2008.

Syed Irfan Ahmed (“Irfan”) came to the United Kingdom in 1981. He worked in orthopaedics as a junior doctor in Huddersfield, Swindon, and Dartford before becoming a singlehanded general practitioner in Blackpool. Dedicated to the community, he raised funds for several local charities. He was also chairman of the local branch of the Overseas Doctors’ Association. Passionate about cricket, Irfan was a county level player in Bihar, India, as well as having been in the under 18 Bihar national team. He leaves a wife, Rukhsana, and two sons.

Shahab Ullah Qureshi
Srinivasan Ravi

Cite this as: BMJ 2009;339:b4302

Montague Joshua Goldberg

Former consultant cardiologist Leicester (b 1924; q Witwatersrand 1942; FRCP, DSc), died from diffuse cerebrovascular disease on 28 September 2009.

Montague Joshua Goldberg (“Monty”) came from South Africa, completing his cardiology training at the Middlesex Hospital before being appointed to Leicester. Under his leadership the cardiac unit grew to become a major UK centre. He was an excellent clinician in both adult and paediatric cardiology. Besides a phenomenal capacity for work, Monty showed great loyalty and friendship and had a mischievous sense of humour. He was instrumental in setting up the medical school at Leicester and received from it an honorary doctorship. In his final years he suffered greatly with a degenerative neurological condition and depression. He was predeceased by his wife, Daphne, and leaves three sons and six grandchildren.

Peter Hubner

Cite this as: BMJ 2009;339:b4151

Paul Francis Dorian Naylor

Emeritus professor of dermatology University of London and former senior physician Department of Dermatology, St Thomas’ Hospital (b 1924; q Cambridge/SThomas’s Hospital, London, 1948; MA, MD), d 9 May 2009.

Paul Francis Dorian Naylor won a state scholarship to Cambridge and graduated with a double first. After qualifying, he spent his national service as a graded physiologist in the Royal Army Medical Corps investigating soldiers’ load carrying with modern neuromuscular techniques. At St Thomas’s he investigated blister formation, later developing specialised electrodes and polarographic techniques to measure oxygen diffusion and the skin’s microcirculation. Paul helped to establish St Thomas’s as a leading centre in British dermatology, leading to the relocation of St John’s Institute of Dermatology there in the 1980s. He leaves a wife, Adrien, and two children.

Charles P E Naylor

Cite this as: BMJ 2009;339:b4305

James Ramsay Philp

Professor emeritus University of Alabama (b 1936; q Edinburgh 1960; MD, FRCP, FACP), died from respiratory and heart failure on 26 May 2009.

A distinguished student, James Ramsay Philp was awarded an MD with commendation from Aberdeen for research that led to the Scottish register of hyperthyroid patients treated with radioiodine. After a lectureship in Aberdeen, he was senior lecturer in bacteriology and infectious diseases at the Wright Fleming Institute in London before being appointed associate professor of infectious diseases at Wake Forest University in North Carolina. There he developed the amplified lymphokine production method. An advocate of problem based learning, he introduced the technique to undergraduate and postgraduate training in Alabama, where he was senior associate dean until he retired in 2002. He leaves a wife, Elizabeth; three children; and seven grandchildren.

Elizabeth Tylden

Former consultant child and family psychiatrist Bromley Hospital, and liaison psychiatrist University College Hospital, London (b 1917; q Cambridge/London 1943; MA, MRCPsych), d 3 February 2009.

Elizabeth Tylden (“Betty”) was an expert witness in child abuse cases and well known for her work with adult survivors of child abuse and people traumatised by the psychological techniques used by religious cults. With her husband, George Morgan, she established the country’s first supported care and liaison psychiatry University College Hospital and became an active member of the Behçet’s Syndrome Society. With a wicked sense of humour, he was a constant source of jokes and amusing stories. He leaves a wife, Jackie, and two children.

Jackie Varty

Cite this as: BMJ 2009;339:b4022

Shee Hung Yu

General practitioner Lancing, West Sussex (b 1947; q Colombo, Sri Lanka, 1975), died from meningococcal septicaemia and a heart attack on 6 October 2008.

After his internship in Sri Lanka, Shee Hung Yu went into general practice before coming to the United Kingdom in 1978. He started in anaesthetics in Chelmsford, but trained in general practice in Guildford in 1984 and settled in Edmonton, setting up his own practice in 1990. He was a member of the local medical committee, the Edmonton branch of the BMA, and the professional executive committee of Enfield Primary Care Trust. He loved politics and was considering running as the Conservative candidate for Edmonton before his sudden illness. He leaves a wife and five children.

Cite this as: BMJ 2009;339:b4303

Christopher Paul Varty

General practitioner Edmonton, London (b 1965; q St George’s Hospital, London, 1989; DCH), died from cancer of unknown primary on 7 September 2009.

After training as a general practitioner in Worthing, Christopher Paul Varty (“Chris”) became a partner in 1994. He gained a qualification in acupuncture. He showed passion and a focused determination in everything that he did. He ran the London Marathon in 2006, raising money for charity. Shortly afterwards, he was diagnosed with Behçet’s disease and became an active member of the Behçet’s Syndrome Society. With a wicked sense of humour, he was a constant source of jokes and amusing stories. He leaves a wife, Jackie, and two children.

Cite this as: BMJ 2009;339:b4047

Guy Dawkins

Cite this as: BMJ 2009;339:b4147

M H Yu

Cite this as: BMJ 2009;339:b4022