Geoffrey Dean

Epidemiologist who contributed to the understanding of multiple sclerosis

Geoffrey Dean, who has died in Dublin aged 90, was best known as an epidemiologist who in several studies established the importance of an environmental influence on the pathogenesis of multiple sclerosis. This is regarded as his most important scientific contribution. His work is of particular relevance at present because of increasing evidence that the environmental factor in multiple sclerosis is sunlight exposure. Reduced sunlight exposure results in low vitamin D concentrations and increased susceptibility to autoimmune disease.

Dean’s interest in multiple sclerosis peaked after he arrived in South Africa in 1947 when he observed the marked variation in prevalence of the disease among the different ethnic groups. The prevalence of multiple sclerosis among English speaking white people born in South Africa was only one quarter and among the Afrikaans speaking white people born in South Africa only one 11th, as frequent as that of the immigrants from northern Europe. Subsequently, with John Kurtzke, he established that immigration before the age of 15 led to a reduced risk for the development of multiple sclerosis in immigrants from northern Europe who settled in South Africa. After that age the immigrants brought with them the high risk of multiple sclerosis that pertains to north Europe. These studies, published in the BMJ in 1967 and 1971, showed a strong environmental effect on the development of multiple sclerosis (1967;2:724-30, and 1971;3:725-9). At that time an undetermined infectious agent acting in the mid-teens seemed to be the most likely cause.

Dean was one of the few doctors who, in 1965 during the apartheid years, criticised the South African government for the maltreatment of prisoners. Between the first publication in 1950, in the BMJ, on barium carbonate poisoning and the last in 2008, there were a total of 120 papers and several books, including an autobiography, The Turnstone, in 2002.

Born in December 1918 in Wrexham, North Wales, where his father was a local bank manager, Dean was educated at Ampleforth and started his medical studies in 1936, aged 17, at Liverpool University, qualifying in June 1943. He served as a medical officer with Bomber Command from 1943 to 1945. He married Noni Devlin in June 1944. In postwar England the prospects for advancement as a doctor were daunting, and Dean took a ship to South Africa as the ship’s doctor, settling eventually in Port Elizabeth and practising as a consultant physician. After moving back to Dublin in 1968 he was later appointed a Commander of the Order of the British Empire by Queen Elizabeth; University College Dublin conferred on him a doctorate of science; and the Royal College of Physicians in Ireland conferred on him its fellowship.

In his last decade he developed prostatic carcinoma and fibrosing alveolitis. He fought against both illnesses with tenacity and was determined to live to contribute further to the understanding of multiple sclerosis and to publish the next paper. He leaves his second wife, Maria, and four children.

Michael Hutchinson

Geoffrey Dean, epidemiologist (b 1918, q 1943 Liverpool), died 7 September 2009 from fibrosing alveolitis.

Cite this as: BMJ 2009;339:b5100
Richard James Bayly
Former general practitioner
Southampton (b 1923; q Charing Cross Hospital, London, 1951), died from metastatic malignant melanoma on 27 March 2009.

Richard James Bayly (“Dick”) captained his university rugby XV. His studies were interrupted by national service, during which he was a technician in the Royal Air Force. After house jobs, he took his first position in general practice in Reading. He settled in Southampton three years later and remained there until his retirement in 1984. In the later years of his career, he became the medical officer to the Southampton docks. He enjoyed travelling throughout Europe, but favoured France and eventually settled for a part of the year in south west France and latterly in Normandy. He leaves Jean, his wife of 52 years; two children; and four grandchildren.

Sally Thomson
Cite this as: BMJ 2009;339:b5169

Janina Elizabeth Hopkin
Former associate specialist in medical genetics Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University NHS Trust (b 1950; q Welsh National School of Medicine 1973), d 6 November 2009.

Janina Elizabeth Hopkin qualified with full honours and a distinguished collection of distinctions and academic prizes, then completing a masters degree in human genetics Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University. Beyond a rich family life, she developed at Oxford into a highly collected of distinctions and academic prizes, then completing a masters degree in human genetics Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University. Beyond a rich family life, she developed at Oxford into a highly

Sally Hopkin
Cite this as: BMJ 2009;339:b5116

Martin Frank Hyatt
Former general practitioner Eltham, London (b 1935; q Royal London Hospital 1959; MFFP), d 20 March 2009. Martin Frank Hyatt did his house jobs at Whipps Cross Hospital before working for the Colonial Medical Service in the Gambia during 1960-1. After two years of locums and vocational training, he became an assistant and then partner in the Eltham practice, where he remained until retirement in 2000. Martin also worked as sessional medical officer for Greenwich Health Cytology and Optimum Health Family Planning. He was secretary and chairman of the Lewisham division of the BMA, as well as president of the West Kent Medico-Chirurgical Society. Passionate about classical music and opera, he was also an excellent wine maker. He leaves Marilyn, his wife of 49 years; two daughters; and seven grandchildren.

V R K Rao
Cite this as: BMJ 2009;339:b5143

Gareth Richard Melville-Jones
Consultant histopathologist Withybush General Hospital, Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire, d 2 January 2009.

My friend and colleague Gareth Richard Melville-Jones was quirky, unusual, dedicated, and meticulous. All in his professional circle admired his diagnostic skill and professionalism, and none could fail to be influenced both by his humanity and by his simple plain specialness. Fewer people, however, were aware of Gareth the inventor. Oh that he had buckled down and obtained patents for his inventions. For fame and fortune may have followed from the Gareth patented Microscope Work Station, or even the Indestructible Dog Basket. All his friends will smile as they think of him, and he will be sorely missed. He leaves a wife, Caryl, and three children.

Sonya Naish
Cite this as: BMJ 2009;339:b5168

Dennis Snow Ridley
Former consultant pathologist Hospital for Tropical Diseases, London (b 1918; q London 1942; OBE, MD, FRCPath), died from heart disease on 25 April 2009.

In 1966, Dennis Snow Ridley, a meticulous microscopist, published with William Jopling, a clinical leprologist, the classification of leprosy according to immunity.