Mark Borisovich Mirsky

Historian of Russian surgery who challenged Soviet ideology

Professor Mark Mirsky was an internationally known historian of Russian medicine, surgery, and health care; a prolific writer and medical journalist; and head of the Moscow Scientific Society of Medical Historians.

Journalistic activity had a strong impact on Mirsky’s scientific career. In a way he was the Russian counterpart of the late Roy Porter, a famous English medical historian (BMJ 2002;324:680, doi:10.1136/bmj.324.7338.680). Both were prolific journalists, and both suddenly died in traffic crashes. Nowadays most professional medical historians work in a narrow temporal and thematic framework. Mirsky was remarkable for his wide scientific interests. His many papers and monographs were dedicated to different periods of Russian medicine; Soviet health care; biographies of famous physicians and surgeons and Soviet ministers of health.

October revolution

After the collapse of Soviet regime in 1991 he started to research previously forbidden topics, such as Russian medical emigrants after the October revolution of 1917, Stalinist repression of doctors, and the impact of foreign physicians on Russian medicine and health care. For example, he wrote about Robert Erskine (1677-1719) of Scotland who became the first Russian archiater he wrote about Robert Erskine (1677-1719) of Scotland who became the first Russian archiater he wrote about Robert Erskine (1677-1719) of Scotland who became the first Russian archiater he wrote about Robert Erskine (1677-1719) of Scotland who became the first Russian archiater he wrote about Robert Erskine (1677-1719) of Scotland who became the first Russian archiater he wrote about Robert Erskine (1677-1719) of Scotland who became the first Russian archiater he wrote about Robert Erskine (1677-1719) of Scotland who became the first Russian archiater he wrote about Robert Erskine (1677-1719) of Scotland who became the first Russian archiater...

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Mark Borisovich Mirsky, medical historian (b 1930; q Stalin Second Moscow State Medical Institute 1954), died in a car crash on 19 June 2010. Cite this as: BMJ 2010;341:c4577
Douglas Cecil Cornish
Former medical adviser Rolls-Royce (b 1925; q St George’s Hospital, London, 1951; DObstRCOG), died from cancer of the oesophagus on 16 June 2010.

Douglas Cecil Cornish (“Doug”) trained in medicine after wartime service in the Fleet Air Arm. He joined a general practice in Rugby in 1956. Developing an interest in industrial medicine, he initially worked part time for the Employment Medical Advisory Service and then full time with the Factory Inspectorate. In 1978 he joined Rolls-Royce at Coventry and Ansty and then Derby until he retired in 1987, researching Raynaud’s phenomenon in workers using vibrating machinery. A keen squash player and sailor, Doug enjoyed carpentry and music in retirement but mainly concentrated on bringing his garden to a state of near perfection. He leaves a wife, Mollie-Anne; four children; and 10 grandchildren.

Suzanne Chapman
Cite this as: BMJ 2010;341:c4534

Alexander Rattray Dow
Former consultant in accident and emergency medicine Sunderland Hospitals (b 1923; q Aberdeen 1952; FFEMS), d 25 June 2010. Alexander Rattray Dow (“Sandy”) trained in medicine after demobilisation from the Glider Pilot Regiment. Captured on D-Day, he escaped and was sheltered by the French Resistance for three months until relieved by American Forces. After qualifying and house jobs Sandy worked in Jamaica for two years before becoming a general practitioner on a new housing estate in Sunderland and clinical assistant in the local accident and emergency department for 17 years. He became consultant in the department in 1973 until he retired, establishing an efficient department and a particular interest in hand injuries. He was also a magistrate. Predeceased by his wife, Anne, by three months, he leaves four children and nine grandchildren.

Cite this as: BMJ 2010;341:c4517

William Richard Easy
Former consultant anaesthetist Vale of Leven Hospital, Alexandria (b 1944; q Edinburgh 1970; FRCA), died from a glioblastoma on 1 June 2010. After house jobs William Richard Easy (“Bill”) joined the Royal Air Force (RAF), serving as station medical officer before training in anaesthesia and becoming a consultant in the early 1980s. He retired from the RAF in 1989 and became consultant in the west of Scotland. He developed key services, including intensive and high dependency care and the training of anaesthetic assistants; established the acute pain service; and popularised total intravenous anaesthesia. His embarked on a parallel farming career after buying a sheep farm, retiring from medical practice in 2006 to pursue farming and his many other interests. He leaves a wife, Karen, and two sons from his first marriage.

Cite this as: BMJ 2010;341:c4520

Ross Meuros Paxton
Former consultant neuroradiologist Plymouth Hospitals (b 1944; q St George’s Hospital, London, 1967; FCR, FFR, DMRD), died from oesophageal cancer on 19 May 2010. In the early 1970s at Atkinson Morley’s Hospital, Wimbledon, Ross Meuros Paxton co-wrote the first clinical papers on the then new computed tomography (CT) using the first clinical scanner. Joining the staff of Plymouth Hospitals as a consultant neuroradiologist in 1975, he set up the first regional CT scanner at Freedom Fields Hospital, Plymouth. An outstanding clinician, he was chairman of the radiology division and clinical director of the radiology department. He was forced to cease work by neurological complications of myocardial infarction in 1997, electing to retire though his functional recovery was spectacular. He approached his final illness with courage and pragmatism.

Cite this as: BMJ 2010;341:c4511

He leaves a wife, Pat; two daughters; and seven grandchildren.

Richard Parrish
Cite this as: BMJ 2010;341:c4522

Eleanor Symmers (née Farrell)
Former clinical assistant in rehabilitation medicine Community Rehabilitation Unit, Edinburgh (b 1942; q Glasgow 1965), died from a brain tumour on 6 May 2010. From 1967 Eleanor Symmers (née Farrell) trained at University College Hospital and the Tavistock Clinic in London, their psychodynamic and psychotherapeutic approaches influencing her practice from then on. After marriage and family commitments, she resumed psychiatry at the Royal Edinburgh Hospital in 1978, giving psychological support to women diagnosed with breast cancer by mammography during 1984-9. Her psychoanalytical training was almost completed in 1996 when she diagnosed her own subarachnoid haemorrhage, from which she fully recovered. During 2001-3 she attended a psychoanalysis course which entailed weekly trips to London and working the next day in Edinburgh. She leaves a husband, Bill; three children; and six grandchildren.

Cite this as: BMJ 2010;341:c4511

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