



RUSSELL A. DANIELS/AP

Ronald Mark Davis

Life long crusader against smoking and founding editor of the journal *Tobacco Control*

Medicine and public health in the United States are separate worlds, with different organisations, publications, and leaders. Ron Davis bridged that gap in a way that no other doctor has, bringing the population perspective of public health and preventive medicine to American doctors. Ron entered medical school at the University of Chicago after college at the University of Michigan, and here began a long connection with the American Medical Association (AMA). He was elected president of the medical student section, and even as the most junior trustee, Ron spoke up for health promotion and disease prevention, focusing especially on tobacco control and prevention.

After training in epidemiology and preventive medicine at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Ron became the director of the organisation's new office of smoking and health in 1987. Here he worked with the surgeon general, Charles Koop, to issue three important reports. Ron's encyclopaedic knowledge of the science and history of advertising of tobacco, combined with his ready wit and humour, made him an effective public health advocate and a popular speaker at events—from scientific meetings to public forums to Congressional hearings. He authored or coauthored dozens of scientific papers and editorials about smoking.

In 1991 Ron returned to Michigan to become

chief medical officer in the state department of public health, turning down grander and more prestigious jobs for family reasons.

At about this time Ron and others began agitating for a medical journal devoted to the problem of tobacco. When the AMA declined to sponsor it, Ron pitched the idea to the BMJ Publishing Group, which agreed to publish *Tobacco Control*, an unusual and perhaps unique combination of scientific rigour and a strong advocacy agenda. So began a long relationship with the *BMJ*. Ron became *Tobacco Control's* first editor and shepherded it through its first six years. He then became the North American editor of the *BMJ*, in which he promoted the importance of chronic diseases. The *BMJ* published a series of theme issues on chronic diseases well before their importance was widely recognised. Ron also spearheaded a renewed effort to create a US version of the *BMJ*, which was born as *BMJ USA* in 2001, a monthly digest of the *BMJ* edited for and circulated to 100 000 US doctors. He served as the first editor of that as well.

As Ron climbed the AMA leadership ladder he became a knowledgeable spokesman for the association's bread and butter issues, such as payment of doctors under Medicare, Ron continuously pushed the leadership to strengthen its policies and advocacy for tobacco control and prevention. At Ron's funeral, the association's current board chairman said that "because of Ron's work, tens of thousands of young people never started smoking. Because of Ron, tens of thousands of lives were saved."

Ron had a remarkable ability to work towards solutions, to use meticulously researched positions, and he had an affable, cooperative, but unyielding manner to win over his opponents and move bureaucracies—such as the AMA—to action.

Ron was elected the 162nd president of the AMA in 2006, the first preventive medicine specialist to head the organisation. He continued to advocate the association for activism in public health, expanding beyond tobacco to obesity, bullying, physical activity, and other topics. But just over half way through his term he was diagnosed with metastatic pancreatic cancer.

Ron faced his diagnosis head on, deciding that the association should issue a press release about it and posting frequent updates of his status on the Care Pages website (www.carepages.com) for his many friends and acquaintances. His

postings combined a dispassionate description of his symptoms, pathology, and treatments, with personal reflections about what was happening to him and his family.

Ron investigated all possible treatments for his disease, saying that even a 5% chance of survival was not the same as no chance. He became an advocate for pancreatic cancer research, appearing at many meetings to promote research towards a cure. He shaved his head when his hair began to fall out after chemotherapy, and his collection of hats became a standing joke in his speeches.

Even while ill and receiving chemotherapy, Ron continued his travelling and speaking on behalf of preventive medicine, public health, and the AMA. One of his last achievements was issuing on behalf of the association a carefully researched history of and apology for the association's shameful treatment of African-American doctors throughout its history (*JAMA* 2008;300:323-5).

His final posting on Care Pages, written nine days before his death, ended with his decision to focus on palliative care and gave thanks to all his readers for their support. He died at home, with his family around him, while the semi-annual meeting of the AMA house of delegates was in session in Orlando. Characteristically, Ron Davis sent a letter to be read to the delegates, thanking them for their friendship and support and urging them to work to provide health care for the 46 million US residents who are without health insurance.

Looking back at Ron Davis's too brief 52 years

Because of Ron's work, tens of thousands of young people never started smoking

of life it is clear that he had an unusual talent for bridging divides—between trainees and practising doctors, public health and medicine, the sick and the well, and even the US and the

United Kingdom. He was an enormously effective leader, negotiating successes and strategising ways to achieve concrete accomplishments in real world settings. One leader of the US preventive medicine community said that whenever times were tough and he was trying to puzzle a way forward, he asked himself, "What would Ron do?"

Ron leaves a wife, Nadine, and three sons.

Douglas Kamerow

Ronald Mark Davis, director, Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, Henry Ford Health System, Detroit, and immediate past president, American Medical Association (b 1956; q University of Chicago, 1983; MA public policy), died from pancreatic cancer on 6 November 2008.

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Bahgat Fathalla Allam



Former consultant clinical biochemist Stobhill Hospital, and honorary clinical lecturer Department of Pathological Biochemistry, University of Glasgow (b 1934; q Cairo 1957; DMSc, PhD), died on 15 December 2007 from pulmonary embolism after liver biopsy complicated by biliary sepsis.

Bahgat Fathalla Allam completed a PhD in clinical chemistry in Edinburgh in 1964. His collaborative research projects as a senior registrar and consultant in Glasgow led to multiple publications, predominantly on biochemical abnormalities in acute pancreatitis and endocrine and rheumatological diseases. He also described the relation between serum calcium and albumin. His research in rickets and osteomalacia in the 1970s in the Glasgow population allowed his hospital department to become the national reference laboratory for vitamin D assay. He retired in 1999 and leaves a wife, Nasima; two daughters; and four grandchildren.

Sonia Allam

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Gordon Esslemont Fordyce



Former consultant surgeon South Teesside Hospital Board (b 1910; q Aberdeen 1932; FRCSed), d 27 October 2008.

After qualification, Gordon Esslemont Fordyce worked as a general practitioner in Grangetown, Middlesbrough. With the introduction of the NHS,

he passed the FRCS examination and was appointed consultant general surgeon, working in all the hospitals in the South Teesside group. He kept a note of every operation he performed. A typical list consisted of such varied cases as partial thyroidectomy, below knee amputation, total prostatectomy, and pyloric stenosis. Clearly, he had not heard of subspecialisation, although his great interest was paediatric surgery. He retired in 1975. Predeceased by his wife, Peggy in 2007, after almost 70 years of marriage, he leaves two children and two granddaughters.

Jane Roberts

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Peter Michael Stephen Gillam

Former consultant physician Salisbury General Infirmary (b 1930; q Cambridge/University College Hospital, London, 1955; DOBstRCOG, MD, FRCP), died from chest complications of 1 anti-trypsin deficiency on 27 July 2008.

The sixth generation of a line of doctors from north Norfolk and the Fens since the mid-1700s, Peter Michael Stephen Gillam moved to Salisbury in 1967. He published a landmark series on propranolol in hypertension, and helped set up the medical school at Southampton. As chair of Wessex Regional Medical Advisory Committee he developed cancer care and services for elderly people. He set up the first coronary care unit in Salisbury and led the establishment of the hospice and its charitable foundation. For over 16 years he edited the *Salisbury Medical Bulletin*. He leaves a wife, Anne; four children; and 10 grandchildren.

Stephen Gillam

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Syed Abu Zariat Mohammad Irfanul Haque

Former general practitioner Stockton on Tees (b 1936; q Sind, Hyderabad, 1963; DTCd), died on 8 June 2008 after a stroke.

Syed Abu Zariat Mohammad Irfanul Haque ("Irfan") arrived in the United

Kingdom in 1965 and worked in various hospitals in England and Wales, gaining experience in specialties related to his plans to work as a general practitioner. In 1975 he took over a single handed practice in Stockton on Tees, where he worked until his retirement in 2000. He was interested in child health and obstetrics, working in local clinics and the local GP maternity unit. He gave numerous lectures at Islamic and interfaith meetings and was involved in the Pro-Life Group. He leaves a wife, Shahida; four sons; and three grandchildren.

Iftekhar Ahmed Lone

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Ronald Carl Alan Pearson



General practitioner Sunderland (b 1953; q St Thomas's, London/Oxford 1980; DPhil, MRCP, FRCPATH), died from metastatic kidney cancer on 8 July 2008.

Ronald Carl Alan Pearson ("Carl") delayed his clinical studies at Oxford to gain a DPhil in neuroanatomy with T P S Powell, returning to research on Alzheimer's disease in the same laboratory after qualification. After a sabbatical at Johns Hopkins in Baltimore, he was senior lecturer at St Mary's, London, using molecular techniques to study gene expression in the human brain, and applying them to Alzheimer's disease. He was professor of neuroscience at Sheffield University during 1989-2001. After a year teaching medical students in Tanzania, he resumed a career in clinical medicine in 2002 and trained as a general practitioner. He leaves a wife, Enid, and a daughter.

Enid Michael

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John Anthony Seymour-Jones

Former consultant ear, nose, and throat surgeon Portsmouth and South East Hants Health District (b 1911; q Cambridge/St Thomas's Hospital Medical School, London, 1937; FRCS, DLO), d 28 June 2008.

John Anthony Seymour-Jones won a classics scholarship to Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, later reading natural sciences to enter medicine. After gaining his FRCS in 1940, he served in the Royal Army Medical Corps and became a major. He took up the post of consultant ear, nose, and throat surgeon in Portsmouth and was chairman of the BMA Portsmouth division and the South Western Laryngology Association. He was also commodore of the Royal Albert Sailing Club. Predeceased by his wife, Elizabeth, in 2003 and by a son, he leaves two daughters and six grandchildren.

Rod Bale

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2008;337:a2602

Barclay John Sherry



Former general practitioner Cowley, Oxford (b 1921; q Glasgow 1950; DFC and bar), d 24 August 2008.

Barclay John Sherry ("Bart") served as a navigator in the Royal Air Force (Bomber Command) during the second world war, flying in Lancasters and Mosquitoes, and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and bar. After the war, he qualified in medicine at Glasgow University before moving to Oxford, where he spent the next 38 years in general practice as a much loved and respected family doctor. His interests outside medicine including sailing, ceramics, natural history, and travel. Predeceased by his wife, Rosaleen, in 1998, he leaves three sons and three grandchildren.

Mark Sherry

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