

Obituaries

Chris Pallis

Neurologist who defined brainstem death

On 13 October 1980 the BBC current affairs programme *Panorama* broadcast a report called "Transplants—Are the Donors Really Dead?" It alleged that patients certified as brain dead sometimes recovered, and hence that the supply of transplantable organs was skewed by doctors wanting to remove organs from trauma patients who might have recovered. The programme angered doctors as few programmes have done before or since and engendered massive publicity.

Chris Pallis stepped into the centre of this controversy. As a neurologist with a strong interest in general medicine, and working in a hospital that was a transplant centre, he was accustomed to diagnosing brain death. He was, moreover, an outstanding writer and teacher. He took on the unenviable job of persuading the profession and the public that brainstem death was true death, and, indeed, that it could be diagnosed at the bedside without the need for high-tech imaging. He was the author of the *BMJ's ABC of Brainstem Death* (1983, second edition 1995), which remains a masterpiece of clear exposition.

Brainstem death was a subject that few physicians had studied in any depth, and its cultural implications were largely ignored. "It was," wrote Pallis, "not as firmly perceived as it is today that the criteria used to diagnose death on neurological grounds has



to be rooted in an explicitly formulated philosophical concept of death and, moreover, one that would be widely accepted in a multicultural society."

Christopher Agamemnon Pallis was born in Bombay, the son of a merchant banker from a distinguished Anglo-Greek family. From the *College Classique Cantonal* in Lausanne, Switzerland, he went to Balliol College, Oxford, to study medicine; he did his clinical studies at the Radcliffe Infirmary. While an undergraduate, he met Jeannine Marty, a Frenchwoman, on a train journey from the south of France to Paris; they married a year later, when he qualified. He then spent three years in the Colonial Medical Service in Malaya.

He did his house jobs and registrarship at Maida Vale Hospital for Nervous Diseases and became consultant neurologist at the Postgraduate Medical School, Hammer-smith Hospital, London, where he spent the rest of his career. In 1967 he was appointed physician extraordinary to Dr Radhakrishnan, then president of the Indian republic. He was fluent in French, German, and Greek, and he enjoyed travel, chess, and swimming. He was an exemplary and popular teacher of his postgraduate students.

Pallis was also a highly political person. Though regarded by his colleagues as a communist, he was expelled by the

Communist Party early on, and supported the Revolutionary Communist Party, which was Trotskyist. After he quit it, it became the Workers' Revolutionary Party. Pallis went on to become the leading spokesman for a libertarian socialist semi-anarchist Anglo-French group called Solidarity.

He wrote for the *New Statesman* and other leftist publications under the pseudonym Martin Grainger. When outed by the press as a neurology consultant at Hammer-smith Hospital, he changed his pseudonym to Maurice Brinton and carried on. He was outed again at a time when NHS hospitals were troubled by strikes, but the press received short shrift from his boss, Sir Christopher Booth, who told them firmly that Pallis was a fine neurologist and that his politics, like anyone else's politics, were his own business.

Pallis always felt an outsider in the world of academic neurology and of the establishment in general, a fact that he conceded at his 60th birthday party, held at the Athenaeum. He wrote many political pamphlets including one on the iniquities of the nuclear family, which he gave to a recently separated colleague; Pallis himself lived conspicuously happily in a nuclear family with his wife and son.

Pallis's interest in the interface between neurology and general medicine was reflected in his wide range of publications, covering every aspect of nervous system disease, and his book *The Neurology of Gastro-intestinal Disease* (1974). After 1980 he published almost exclusively on brain death, and in his retirement he worked as an expert witness on legal cases involving complex neurological issues.

In later life he had what his colleagues regarded as Parkinson's disease or a related movement disorder, from which he died. He is survived by Jeannine and his son. [CAROLINE RICHMOND]

Christopher Agamemnon Pallis, consultant neurologist and expert on brainstem death Royal Postgraduate Medical School, London, 1957-88 (b 1923; q Oxford 1947; FRCP), d 10 March 2005.

Advice

We will be pleased to receive obituary notices of around 250 words. Pressure on space means that in most cases we will be able to publish only about 100 words in the printed journal, but we can run a fuller version on our website. We will take responsibility for shortening. We do not send proofs. Good quality, original photographs are welcome. Please give a contact telephone number and, where possible, supply the obituary on a disk or by email to obituaries@bmj.com. If sending a picture electronically, please attach as a jpeg or a tiff rather than as part of a Word document. We need to know the year of birth and exact date of death of the deceased, and we prefer obituaries to state the cause of death. Please spell out abbreviations.

Patricia Anne Doran



Former general practitioner Stamford, Lincolnshire (b Stoke-on-Trent 1933; q Manchester 1957; DCH), died from colon cancer on 29 November 2004.

On qualifying Anne worked at Manchester Royal Infirmary and the Royal Manchester Children's Hospital. After starting her family she continued to practise in the community health service in Lancashire and then in the Lincolnshire area. When family commitments allowed, she took up partnership in general practice in Stamford. After retirement Anne enrolled on a foundation course at the Slade School of Fine Art, later progressing to a diploma in fine art. She was awarded (joint) prize for best painting at the Royal Society of Medicine Medical Art Society's summer exhibition at the Mall Galleries in 2004. She leaves her second husband, Robert Chappell; four children; a stepdaughter; and five grandchildren. [JUDI ROGERS]

decade he completed a second book, *Neurological Cosmology: The World, the Brain and I*. He leaves a wife, Edda; two children; and three grandchildren [ANDREW LEES]

Chakanambarth Mutteriyil Gopinath



Former general practitioner Harlow, Essex (b 1949; q Kasturba Medical College, south India, 1973; DOrth), died from a brain tumour on 6 November 2004.

Gopi worked as the district medical officer for Indian Southern Railways before coming to Britain in September 1979. After various training jobs he was a registrar in orthopaedics at Bedford Hospital for six years and completed an MSc in orthopaedics from the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital, Stanmore. He then changed career to general practice, completing his training in St Neots. He became a principal in general practice in Harlow in 1997. He leaves a wife, Shashi, and two children. [PREETHI GOPINATH, PRAVEEN GOPINATH]

Peter Sanderson



Reader in medicine St Mary's Hospital Medical School, London (b Newcastle 1916; q St Mary's 1943), died from cancer of the larynx on 19 February 2005.

After qualifying and national service in the Royal Army Medical Corps tropical dermatology unit in the Far East from 1946 to 1948, he returned to St Mary's and was appointed assistant director of the medical unit in 1949. He built the first colorimeter within St Mary's and a machine to measure plasma chloride. Later in his career he applied himself to the task of objective measurement of knowledge and understanding, pioneering the use of multiple choice questions in the University of London final examinations and the MRCP. He leaves a wife, three children, and eight grandchildren. [HUGH SANDERSON]

Marjorie Bernelle Thumpston (née Curties)



Former locum consultant cytologist Southend General Hospital (b Rangoon, Burma, 1914; q Rangoon 1937; DCH), died from Alzheimer's disease on 6 September 2004.

Following clinical experience in Rangoon, Bernelle took a job at the Royal Liverpool Children's Hospital. One of the first women commissioned into the Royal Army Medical Corps, she developed an interest in sexually transmitted infections and also served in Belgium. On leaving active service she combined raising a family with locum general practitioner posts in Essex and helping to set up family planning clinics in Southend-on-Sea. Her family planning work and concern with women's welfare led to an interest in cervical cytology. She leaves a husband, Neil; four children; and eight grandchildren. [ALISON J RHODES]

William Walton Gooddy



Former neurologist London (b Boscombe 1916; q University College London 1942; MD, FRCP), d 17 November 2004.

William Gooddy was appointed consulting physician and neurologist at University College Hospital and the National in 1951. He was also appointed consultant neurologist to the navy and at weekends he would see patients at St Richard's Hospital, Chichester, and King Edward VII Hospital, Midhurst. His main academic contributions were in the field of higher cerebral function and particularly time and the nervous system, on which he published papers in the *Lancet* and *Brain* and finally a book in 1988. Later in his career he became interested in the role of trace elements in the causation of neurological disease. He was a fine potter and organist, loved calligraphy, decorated tiles, embroidered, and made jewellery. He was an authority on Stephenson's *Rocket*. In his ninth

Abul Faiz Ahmed Khalid



Former general practitioner northeast London (b Bangladesh 1941; q Dhaka 1963; MRCP), died from a heart attack on 15 February 2005.

Khalid joined the Pakistan Army Medical Corps in 1964, but left upon the death of his father. He was awarded a Commonwealth scholarship and came to the United Kingdom in 1967. But political unrest and subsequent civil war in East Pakistan (which led to the creation of Bangladesh) interrupted his studies, his scholarship was stopped, and he was forced to accept a paid job to support his widowed mother at home and his family in the United Kingdom. For a short period he was a general practitioner near Durham, moving to a singlehanded practice in northeast London until his retirement owing to ill health. He leaves a wife, Poly; three children; and six grandchildren. [M A WAJED]

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