

## Dan Enachescu

Health minister who transformed Romanian health care after communism

Life in Romania in the 1970s and 1980s was not easy. Other Eastern bloc countries struggled to maintain basic living standards by borrowing from the West, but President Nicolae Ceauşescu implemented policies that created the lowest living standards in Europe. Food and fuel were rationed, and most modern drugs were unobtainable. Access to health care depended on nepotism or bribes, and the government spent what money it had on grandiose building projects, notoriously demolishing 7000 houses to construct a palace.

Medical science was influenced by Ceauşescu's wife, Elena, who played a key role in the ban on birth control and legal abortions. One consequence was the highest maternal mortality in Europe. Another was the abandonment of thousands of babies to state run "orphanages" by their impoverished parents. The infection of many of these babies with HIV was a consequence of her encouragement of "microtransfusions" to treat infant malnutrition and denial that there was AIDS in Romania. The isolation of the regime extended into all aspects of life; the authorities refused to import or translate most Western texts and persecuted those who dared pursue links with the West.

### Windows to the West

Yet a few academics kept small windows open to Western scientific developments. One was Dan Enachescu, who has died aged 78. As dean of the Carol Davila University of Medicine and Pharmacy from 1981 to 1988, he trod a tightrope, doing just enough to keep the regime happy while finding copies of texts such as *Gray's Anatomy* and journals such as the *BMJ* and the *Lancet* for his students. Although the university had to teach "state socialism," "Romania's modern history," and "sanitary (health) economics as a political science," Enachescu strove to ensure that teaching did not simply regurgitate dogma but introduced foreign concepts.

Teaching had been dominated by didactic lectures and assessment by oral examinations, which allowed the examiners complete discretion as to who would pass, a decision as likely

to reflect political views and influence as much as students' knowledge. Enachescu introduced practical training in epidemiology and biostatistics, and multiple choice exams. Long before it was common in many Western countries, he cemented links between epidemiology and clinical disciplines so that many final dissertations included a social perspective.

Throughout the communist period, Enachescu tried to introduce the concepts of modern management into medical training. This task was almost impossible, given the capricious nature of the regime, but he seized every opportunity. When an earthquake rocked Romania in 1977, few doctors had any training in emergency planning. The resulting course, subsequently integrated into the undergraduate medical curriculum, contained much that was relevant to making the healthcare system work in less exceptional circumstances.

### A new generation

The revolution in 1989 changed everything. Enachescu became Romania's first post-communist minister of health, starting a programme to create a new generation of health professionals who could support the reform that was needed so badly. He created an Institute for Health Services and Management, which he led after stepping down as minister. He obtained funding from the European Union and the World Bank for an ambitious training programme, involving many of the leading universities in Europe and North America. At first, many students trained abroad, but as soon as the first cohort completed their studies Enachescu established a masters course in Bucharest, with a curriculum based on the most progressive international experiences.

Enachescu saw the importance of strong professional associations and in 1991 cofounded the Romanian Public Health and Health Management Association, a vehicle for continuing professional development that was ahead of its time in eastern Europe. A strong supporter of international collaboration, he ensured that his organisations played a full part in the relevant European associations.

He was a quiet and gentle man but had a clear vision of what was needed and a steely determination to get things done. He was an inspiration to a generation of young Romanian doctors and took great pride in the achievements of his former students.

Enachescu graduated in medicine in 1954 and spent his early years working in rural areas. In 1959 he moved back to Bucharest to pursue a career in public health. He received his doctor of philosophy degree from the Medical University of Bucharest in 1968 and, taking advantage of a brief thaw in Romania's relationship with the West,

undertook postgraduate study at the Free University of Brussels. After three years as minister of health, when he struggled, with only partial success, to implement much needed reforms, he returned to academia, as professor of social medicine. His academic career was again interrupted when he spent five years, between 1975 and 1980, as Romanian ambassador to Switzerland, returning as dean of the medical university.

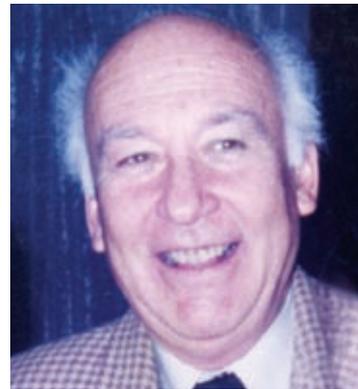
He published almost 200 scientific papers, in the Romanian and international literature, and although a modest person his achievements were recognised with many honours.

He retired formally in 2001. He leaves his wife, Liliana Clara Enachescu. They had no children.

### Andreea Steriu, Martin McKee

Dan Enachescu, former minister of health and university dean (b Bucharest, Romania 1930; q Bucharest 1954; MD PhD), died from cancer on 24 November 2008.

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**Frederick Charles Hurrell**



Former director general Royal Air Force Medical Services (b 1928; q St Mary's Hospital, London, 1952; CB, OBE, FFOM), died from brain cancer on 3 October 2008. Frederick Charles Hurrell ("Freddie") played rugby for England Schoolboys against Scotland and Wales. When called up for deferred national service in 1953, he joined the Royal Air Force on a four year short service commission, subsequently serving until 1988. His distinguished career was devoted to aviation medicine, and included advising on the medical aspects of preventing and investigating flying accidents, and commanding Princess Alexandra Hospital, RAF Wroughton, during the Falklands war. In retirement, as appeals director for seven years, he trebled the funds of the Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund. He leaves a wife, Jay; five daughters; and 12 grandchildren.

**Caroline Walker**

*Cite this as: BMJ 2009;338:b1163*

**Mary Ross Kerr**



Former consultant physician in infectious diseases King's Cross Hospital, Dundee (b 1928; q St Andrews 1950, FRCPEd), died from pneumonia and lung cancer on 28 January 2008. Mary Ross Kerr gained six class medals and the medal for the most distinguished student of the final year. In 1954 she became

consultant in Dundee, retiring in 1992. An inspiring teacher and well-published researcher, she was the first recipient of the Douglas G Adamson Memorial Award in 1981 "for her outstanding contribution to patient care in Tayside." Mary was a member of the Specialist Advisory Committee (Communicable Diseases), 1980-3, and of the national council of the British Society for the Study of Infection, 1984-6. She never married but was affectionately and respectfully known as "Auntie Mary." She leaves a brother.

**Norma H Smith**

**W Duncan Smith**

*Cite this as: BMJ 2009;338:b1151*

**Martin Lowy**

Former consultant orthopaedic surgeon Whittington Hospital, London (b 1933; q Middlesex Hospital 1958; FRCS), d 19 December 2008.

Born in Czechoslovakia, the son of a general practitioner, Martin Lowy survived three years in a concentration camp and came to England at the age of 11 with his mother to join his father, who had escaped to England just before the outbreak of the second world war. After training at the Middlesex Hospital, the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital, and Massachusetts General Hospital, Martin was appointed orthopaedic surgeon to the Royal Northern Hospital in 1972 and later the Whittington Hospital. His main interest was knee injuries. He pioneered arthroscopy in England and was a founder member of the International Arthroscopy Association. He leaves a wife, Clara; two sons; and two grandchildren.

**Martin Lowy**

**Clara Lowy**

*Cite this as: BMJ 2009;338:b1137*

**Maurice Parsonage**

Former consultant neurologist Leeds Regional Hospital Board (b 1915; q Manchester 1939; BSc, DCH, FRCP), d 5 December 2008.

Maurice Parsonage's plans to be a paediatrician were interrupted



by the second world war, when he served as lieutenant colonel in the Royal Army Medical Corps. After the war he trained in neurology and was consultant in Leeds, 1951-80, establishing a centre for epilepsy for the north of England. One of only two UK neurologists with a major commitment to epilepsy in the 1960s and '70s, he was very active in the British Epilepsy Association, the International Bureau for Epilepsy, and the International League against Epilepsy. In 1948 with J W Aldren Turner he described neuralgic amyotrophy, now widely known as the Parsonage-Turner syndrome. Predeceased by his wife, Marion, in 2002, he leaves three children.

**E H Reynolds**

*Cite this as: BMJ 2009;338:b1160*

**William Ian Paterson**



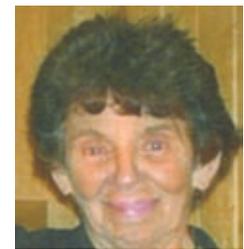
Former consultant orthopaedic surgeon Victoria Hospital, Kirkcaldy (b 1914, q Edinburgh 1938, FRCS), d 29 October 2008. Shortly after qualification, William Ian Paterson ("Ian") joined the Royal Army Medical Corps, rising to acting colonel. He was the second medic to enter the concentration camp at Bergen-Belsen, and was mentioned in dispatches for bravery. After the war, he returned to Scotland to complete his surgical training. For 30 years as an orthopaedic surgeon in Fife, he travelled between hospitals in Dunfermline, Kirkcaldy, Cupar, and St Andrews, setting up acute orthopaedic services.

He also undertook pioneering orthopaedic surgery with leg-lengthening work years before it became commonplace. After retiring in 1980, Ian spent five years as a consultant in Tripoli, Libya, to Colonel Gadaffi's hospital. He leaves a wife, Vicki; four children; and 11 grandchildren.

**Ginny Birrell**

*Cite this as: BMJ 2009;338:b1145*

**Ellen Mali Shiffman (née Rosenthal)**



Former general practitioner Liverpool (b 1924; q Edinburgh 1948; FRCGP), died from metastatic adenocarcinoma on 8 January 2009. Ellen Mali Shiffman (née Rosenthal) was the daughter of a former professor of medicine in Hamburg. After several junior hospital posts, she entered general practice with her husband in Liverpool in 1956 until her retirement in 1989. Elected FRCGP with her husband in 1980, she also served as hospital practitioner in psychiatry at the Sefton and Royal Southern Hospitals. She was a keen golfer, holding office as lady captain, and enjoyed playing bridge. She leaves a husband, Ken; three children; and eight grandchildren.

**Ian Shiffman**

*Cite this as: BMJ 2009;338:b1142*

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