

## John Raymond Hobbs

Pathologist who unravelled immunoglobulin and myeloma chemistry, and pioneered bone marrow transplantation

John Raymond Hobbs, known as Jack, pioneered bone marrow transplantation in Britain at the Westminster Children's Hospital and produced results as good as the world's best. He was also a leader in clinical immunology and protein chemistry. He set up supra-regional protein reference laboratories, developed the first non-invasive cystic fibrosis test (it used meconium), and established reference levels of immunoglobulins. He also recorded the natural history of malignant myeloma.

Hobbs was born in Aldershot, the third son of a soldier. His family eventually settled in his father's home town of Plymouth, but he was evacuated to Penzance during the Blitz. He left Plymouth College at 16 with O levels and worked as a pathology laboratory assistant at Plymouth Hospital for two years. He did his national service in the medical corps, serving in Egypt and the UK. He saved his sergeant's pay and put himself through Plymouth and Devonport Technical College, gaining his inter BSc—the university entrance qualification—in nine months and earning a state scholarship. He entered Middlesex Hospital Medical School in 1950, took a BSc in 1953, and qualified in 1956, winning the lion's share of prizes. He did his house jobs at the Middlesex, Central Middlesex, Brompton, and Royal Free Hospitals.

As registrar at the Westminster Children's Hospital during 1959-61, he worked with the haematologist Professor Joe Humble, from whom he gained an understanding of the potential of bone marrow transplantation to one day cure genetic diseases and cancers. During this time he donated 500 ml of his own bone marrow for research. He earned an MD in 1963 for a thesis on labelled iodine in the diagnosis of thyroid

disease, supervised by Sir Richard Bayliss.

In 1963 he was appointed consultant haematologist at Hammersmith Hospital, and here he developed his interests in protein chemistry, particularly serum immunoglobulins in conditions such as malignant myeloma, which was still poorly understood. In 1970 he was made professor of chemical pathology at Westminster Medical School. Two years earlier the first successful bone marrow stem cell transplant operation had been performed in Minnesota by Robert Good in a child with severe immunodeficiency. In 1971 Hobbs, Joe Humble, and the tissue-typing expert David James performed the UK's first bone marrow transplantation in a 7 month baby with severe immune deficiency, using a sibling donor.

A year later they performed father to child transplantation, and in 1973 they did the first transplant using an unrelated matched volunteer donor on a patient with granulomatous disease. At the time there was a worldwide appeal for a bone marrow donor for Anthony Nolan, a young patient of his with Wiskott-Aldrich syndrome. No donor was ever found, and Anthony died aged about 9. This led to the Anthony Nolan bone marrow registry for unrelated donors, with which Hobbs was closely associated.

He collaborated with the Save the Children Fund, Emma Nicholson MP, and Iris Burton, editor of *Woman's Own*, to raise money to build positive airflow cubicles ("bubbles" for children undergoing transplantation) at the Westminster Children's Hospital and to train consultants. This was done by the charity he founded and ran, the Cogent (correction of genetic diseases by transplantation) Trust.

Hobbs's team had performed 285 transplant operations by 1992, when the Westminster Children's Hospital's work was transferred to the Chelsea and Westminster Hospital and, despite Hobbs's best efforts, the transplant unit was closed. He and colleagues were intensely disappointed, believing that many of the children on their waiting list had nowhere else to go that

offered the same amount of expertise in hard to treat patients.

He continued his immunology work at Chelsea and Westminster Hospital until his retirement in 1994 with the title of professor of immunology. Cogent's funds were used to create a bone marrow transplant unit at Bristol Children's Hospital, which he supported vigorously.

Hobbs won many national and international prizes and fellowships. He wrote over 250 papers. He lectured in more than half the medical schools of Europe and in 25 in the United States and 30 in the Commonwealth. He advised governments in Russia, Poland, Uruguay, Peru, Hong Kong, and China. His former trainees have accrued 134 higher degrees and 48 professorships.

He set up the supra-regional protein reference laboratories that provide a specialist service to all pathology departments. He campaigned successfully for the Royal College of Pathologists to grant fellowship to non-medical pathologists, and this has contributed enormously to the college's academic strength.

Hobbs was, said his colleague Pam Alexander, a moral, compassionate person who delighted in scientific achievement, gave consistent support to those who trained in his department, and believed absolutely in the sanctity of every life. He was intellectually rigorous and had an encyclopaedic knowledge of his subject. Energetic, forthright, and holding strong views, he was also ebullient and fun to be with.

In his retirement he enjoyed going to the theatre and opera, his stamp collection, his grandchildren, and keeping up with advances in his subject. He remained in touch with his colleagues and published his last paper in 2007, around the time his lung cancer was diagnosed.

He is survived by Patricia, his wife of 54 years, and daughters, Wendy, Lucy, and Trudy.

### Caroline Richmond

John Raymond Hobbs, emeritus professor of immunology Charing Cross and Westminster Medical School, London (b 17 April 1929; q Middlesex Hospital 1956; BSc (Hons), DObstRCOG, MD, FRCP, FRCPath, FRCPCH), d 13 July 2008.

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2008;337:a1434

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**Eric Aylmer Burkitt**



Former consultant psychiatrist Darlington (b 1916; q St Bartholomew's Hospital, London, 1942; DPM, FRCPsych, BA), died from heart failure on 11 November 2007. His training having been interrupted by tuberculosis, Eric Aylmer Burkitt specialised in psychiatry at Barts and the Belmont Hospital, Surrey after the second world war. He worked in Norwich and in 1959 was appointed consultant at Winterton Hospital, near Sedgefield, helping to reduce patient numbers from 3000 to 1200. He worked as senior consultant psychiatrist at Darlington Memorial Hospital, one of the first psychiatric units to be built within a general hospital, in 1968 until he retired in 1977. In 1979 he was awarded a BA in mathematics from the Open University. Predeceased by his wife, Beryl, in 1998, he leaves three children and four grandchildren.

**Alison House**

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2008;337:a1316

**Anthony John Fogarty**



General practitioner Norwich (b 1938; q Trinity College Dublin 1965; MRCP, DRCOG), died from a heart attack on 16 July 2008.

Anthony John Fogarty ("Tony") was accepted to read engineering at Cambridge in 1957. Two years later, having finished his national service, he decided to study medicine. He joined a general practice in Oxford, but in 1982 he became

disillusioned with medicine, gave up general practice, and moved to Honiton, where he opened Fogarty's Bookshop. He returned to general practice in west London 18 months later. After 10 years, he moved to East Anglia, where he practised in Botesdale and Norwich and as a GP locum in the Norwich area. He leaves his second wife, Elizabeth; their two children; six children from his first marriage; and six grandchildren.

**Kevin Fogarty**

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2008;337:a1391

**Mary Ethel Inekhomo Obiyan**



Staff grade in old age liaison psychiatry South London and Maudsley NHS Trust (b 1946; q Ibadan, Nigeria, 1971; FRCS Glas, DMH), died on 29 March 2008 after liver transplantation.

Mary Ethel Inekhomo Obiyan came to the United Kingdom from Nigeria in 1975 to train as a surgeon, attaining the FRCS (Glasgow) in 1982. She returned to Nigeria, rising to consultant status in 1991. She returned to the United Kingdom in 1992 to work as a surgeon, in 1997 retraining as a psychiatrist. Having obtained the diploma in mental health from Belfast in 1998, she took up various training posts in the United Kingdom. A committed Christian, she set up charities to help underprivileged children in Nigeria. She leaves two children.

**Bernadette Ewah, Sarah Akindolie**

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2008;337:a1393

**James O'Reilly**

Former consultant ear, nose, and throat surgeon South Tyrone Hospital, Dungannon, Northern Ireland (b 1925; q University College Dublin 1948; FRCS, FRCSEd), d 25 March 2008.



James O'Reilly ("Seamus") was born into a medical family in County Cavan in the Republic of Ireland: his father, grandfather, two uncles, a brother, and several cousins were all doctors. His surgical training (in Bradford and Hull) was interrupted by time in general practice as locum for his father and brother in law. He was appointed a consultant in 1962 in what was initially a joint appointment in South Tyrone Hospital and the Mid Ulster Hospital (Magherafelt) with some sessions in Omagh. He retired in 1989. He leaves a wife, Rosamund, and three children.

**Mary Lutton**

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2008;337:a1392

**Charles Frederick Rolland**



Former consultant physician Cumberland Infirmary, Carlisle (b 1920; q Cambridge/Edinburgh 1944; BA, MD, FRCPEd), died from coronary heart disease on 27 July 2008.

An accomplished athlete with a love of climbing, Charles Rolland joined the Royal Army Medical Corps and volunteered for the commandos but was enlisted with the Royal West African Frontier Force in India. He was first appointed consultant physician in Edinburgh in 1954, moving to Carlisle in 1956. He developed the geriatrics service, pioneered intensive care, and was the first specialist in diabetes and endocrinology, as well as covering dermatology and genitourinary medicine when required. He

chaired and was a member of numerous committees, and was an examiner for Newcastle University and the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh. He retired in 1983. He leaves a wife, Venetia; two children; and two grandchildren.

**Jim Cox**

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2008;337:a1383

**Peter George Smith**



Former consultant histopathologist Queen's Medical Centre, Nottingham (b 1933; q The London 1956; FRCPath), died from complications of myelomatosis on 9 May 2008.

After national service in the Royal Army Medical Corps in Malaya, Peter George Smith returned to the London Hospital to train as a pathologist. He was registrar at the Bernhard Baron Institute of Pathology and later lecturer in morbid anatomy at the London and Royal Free Hospitals. In 1968 he was appointed consultant histopathologist to the Nottingham Hospitals, developing a special interest and skill in liver pathology. Chairman of the medical staff committee, his diplomacy, organisational skills, and integrity were much valued during the transition from district general hospitals to teaching hospitals. He leaves a wife, June; three daughters; and a grandson.

**Peter James, Peter Toghil**

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2008;337:a1222

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