

Leila Denmark

Paediatrician and oldest practising doctor in the United States

Leila Daughtry Denmark, paediatrician
(b 1898; q 1928, Medical College of Georgia),
died on 1 April 2012 after a long illness

Dr Leila Alice Denmark called her patients “little angels.” She loved being a paediatrician, and she never wanted to stop. But in May 2001 she walked the few steps from her country home to her rustic doctor’s office for one last day of play: “Doing what you don’t like is work,” she was fond of saying. “Doing what you like is play.”

Later that day she would call out into the waiting room for the last time, “Who is the next little angel?”

Normally, there is nothing unusual about a doctor calling it quits and retiring—but Denmark was 103 years old. “The only reason she quit was because her eyesight was getting poor,” said her daughter, Mary Denmark Hutcherson. “She told me, ‘I don’t want to make any mistakes.’”

When she retired, Denmark was the oldest practising physician in the country, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics. Before her death at the age of 114, the Gerontology Research Group, which verifies claims of extreme old age, reported her as the fourth oldest person in the world.

High school science

Leila Alice Daughtry was born on 1 February 1898 in Portal, Georgia, the third of 12 children in a prosperous farming family. After earning a bachelors degree at Tift College in Forsyth, Georgia, she taught high school science. But after two years she concluded that teaching was not for her. She decided to pursue her dream of being a doctor, which was not an easy choice for a woman in the 1920s. Her application to study medicine was declined by Emory University in Atlanta, which remained all male—and all white—until 1953. In 1924 she was accepted by the Medical College of Georgia in Augusta, the only woman in a class of 52. She earned a medical degree in 1928 and days later married the banker John Eustace Denmark, who was later vice president of the US Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta.

Denmark interned in the segregated African American wards at Grady Memorial Hospital in Atlanta and then Henrietta Egleston Hospital for Children in Atlanta. Her final internship was at the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia. In 1930, her only child, Mary, was born. The next year Denmark started a practice from the family home in Atlanta, allowing her to care for her daughter while working. She thought that children were



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better off being raised in the home, not in day care, and years later complained that parenting had “gone out of style.”

The Denmarks eventually moved outside Atlanta, with Denmark’s practice following each family move. She never had a receptionist or nurse, and she did not require appointments. In earlier years her fee was \$4, which had risen to \$10 by the time she retired. Many of her little angels were loyal as adults, bringing their children to Denmark. It was not unusual for Denmark to have treated three or four generations of families.

Denmark had strong opinions on child rearing that she did not hesitate to express to parents. One of her pet peeves was cow’s milk, and she recommended to parents that children should not drink it: “That cow out in the pasture never had a drop of milk after she was weaned, and look how strong and healthy she is.” She was opposed to children using dummies and consuming sugar, including that in fruit juices, and felt that water was sufficient.

Vaccine research

In 1932 when an epidemic of whooping cough broke out in Atlanta, the young mother and doctor took a particular interest. Vaccines were available at the time, but not widely used nor proven effective. Denmark began long term research, studying hundreds of children at the Central Presbyterian Church clinic in Atlanta, where during the next half century she donated her services for the

children of poor families one day a week. She collaborated with Emory University, Georgia State Public Health Laboratory, and the drug firm Eli Lilly, which provided the vaccine.

In 1936 Denmark was the sole author of a paper that documented her investigation (*Am J Dis Child* 1936;52:587-98). She also studied other vaccinations, including diphtheria, tetanus, and their combinations. She published another paper in 1942 in the same journal; her findings helped in the development of the now standard vaccinations for diphtheria, whooping cough, and tetanus (*Am J Dis Child* 1942;63:453-66).

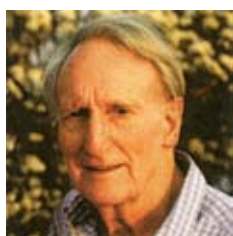
In the 1970s Denmark privately published the book *Every Child Should Have a Chance*, which sold thousands of copies worldwide. In 2000 she received an honorary degree from Emory University—and a standing ovation. William M Chace, Emory’s president from 1994 to 2003, remembers only two other similar outpourings of emotion during his tenure: one for the Dalai Lama, the other for the African American baseball legend Hank Aaron.

After retiring, Denmark, whose husband died in the early 1990s, for several years still consulted with parents over the telephone. In declining health in recent years, she was cared for in her daughter’s home in Athens, Georgia. Denmark leaves her daughter.

Ned Stafford

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Richard William Beard



Former professor of obstetrics and gynaecology St Mary's Hospital, Paddington (b 1931; q St Bartholomew's Hospital 1955; MD, FRCOG), died from cancer on 13 January 2012.

Richard William Beard joined King's College Hospital in 1968, where his work on the physiology and management of diabetes in pregnancy gained him international recognition. He participated in the further development of fetal monitoring and in the investigation of chronic pelvic pain, which he pursued even after his retirement. His maternity risk management group at St Mary's persuaded the trust to develop risk management for all specialties. Understanding the role of technology in future medical research he initiated a system for data collection. As well as developing an undergraduate teaching programme, he also acted as an expert adviser to various bodies. After his retirement he and his wife, Irène, set up a charity and masterminded the Sheffield Institute for Motor Neurone Disease. He is survived by Irène and children from two marriages.

Lesley Regan

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Francine Marjorie Bowsher



General practitioner, Clacton on Sea, Essex (b 1953; q London Hospital 1977), died from metastatic carcinoma with unknown primary site on 10 February 2011.

Francine Marjorie Bowsher (née Grange) was born at Barton on Sea, Hampshire, and chose to live most of her life living by the sea. She attended Talbot Heath School in Bournemouth and subsequently studied medicine at the London Hospital, where she met her husband, Anthony. After house jobs in Chelmsford and at the London she trained for general practice in Hull and Torquay. She worked as a general practitioner in Clacton from 1984. She took premature retirement from the East Lynne Medical Practice in the summer of 2010 because of ill health. She leaves her husband, her mother, three sons, and a daughter.

Anthony Grange

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Brian John Chapman



Former consultant geriatrician and acute physician, Royal Infirmary, Edinburgh (b 1956; q Edinburgh 1981; FRCPE), died from metastatic renal cancer on 9 February 2012.

Brian John Chapman became the first consultant physician in geriatric and acute medicine at the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh in 1989. Under his leadership as clinical director, the specialty became the largest in the hospital, with a new acute stroke service. Brian worked tirelessly to promote services for older people at national and local level, inspired many trainees to join the specialty, and was mentor to many consultant colleagues. He contributed to the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh and the British Geriatrics Society, which awarded him the president's medal. Devoted to his family, he also enjoyed many sports and contemporary Scottish art. He is survived by his wife, Dorothy, and three children.

Nicki Colledge

Andrew Elder

Andrew Coull

Cite this as: BMJ 2012;344:e3387

Warren Howard Redding



Former associate specialist Stamford Hospital (b 1953; q Charing Cross and Westminster Medical School 1976; FRCS), died from metastatic cancer on 30 October 2011.

Warren Howard Redding became a fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons at the age of 24, joining the Royal Marsden Hospital, where he coupled clinical attachments with original research. Having met and married Jean, he entered a career in emergency medicine, where his senior training as a surgeon enhanced a growing reputation as a safe pair of hands. His all encompassing skills as doctor, teacher, manager, and friend to colleagues and patients alike meant a life devoted to the service of his community in Stamford for the last 20 years. He died suddenly, after a very short illness, in Peterborough City Hospital. He is survived by his wife, a son, a daughter, and a granddaughter.

Andrew Cope

Cite this as: BMJ 2012;344:e2308

Eric Philip Simkin



Former consultant surgeon Royal Liverpool University Hospital (b 1927; q Jesus College, Cambridge, 1949, Central Middlesex Hospital 1952), d 25 January 2012.

Eric Philip Simkin originally wanted to be an orthopaedic surgeon but during a registrar post at the old Liverpool Royal Infirmary he realised his true vocation was anorectal surgery. In 1967 he obtained the rare honour of an MChir degree from Cambridge. Eric opened

a specialist anorectal clinic at Sefton General Hospital and then at the Royal Liverpool University Hospital, where he was consultant from 1978 onwards. He retired in 1992 and subsequently held a couple of locum positions. Eric was never happier than when he was working and even ended up examining patients when he attended a cottage hospital in north Wales with a broken ankle. He leaves his wife, Marilyn; two children; and three grandchildren.

Anna and Jeffrey Kwartz

Cite this as: BMJ 2012;344:e3384

Andrew James Stanford



Former general practitioner, Selby (b 1944; q King's College, London 1967), d 7 July 2011

Andrew James Stanford spent time in Nigeria, Australia, and Papua New Guinea in his early career. After returning to London in 1969, he worked in anaesthetics and obstetrics and gynaecology. With his new wife, Margaret, he went to Tanzania in 1971 to run a rural hospital. Five years later the couple moved back to Yorkshire, and he joined a practice in Selby. He preferred patients to committees and also undertook weekly sessions of "dental gases" for a local dentist for many years. Andrew had a lifelong interest in explosives and guns. In his retirement, he (and Margaret) went on deep sea diving expeditions with marine archaeologists, salvaging cannons from wrecks. He leaves Margaret, three children, and four grandchildren.

Margaret Stanford, John Reid

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