

Richard Isay

Cured psychoanalysis of its homophobia

Richard Alexander Isay, psychoanalyst (b 1934; q 1961, University of Rochester), died on 28 June 2012 from only recently discovered adenocarcinoma of the oesophagus, stomach, and liver.

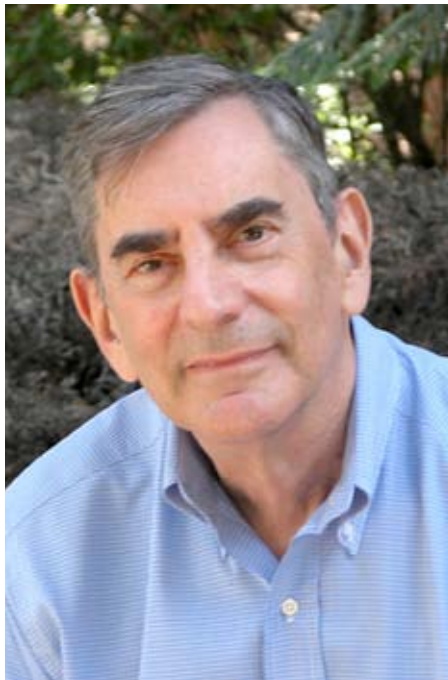
Richard Isay first had to overcome his own ignorance of homosexuality and embrace the fact that he was gay before forcing the American Psychoanalytic Association (APsaA) to do the same. And neither was easy. The Oedipus complex was the dominant paradigm of psychoanalytic theory when he had trained. Homosexuality was seen as a form of so called “arrested development”; an immature and inferior status. This theory propped up much of the then commonplace legal and social discrimination against homosexual people. Isay bought into the construct and underwent a decade of analysis both as part of his training and to “cure” himself of homosexuality. He married Jane Franzblau and had two sons.

Diagnostic bible

The 1969 riots in Manhattan, when police raided the Stonewall Inn, one of few establishments to welcome openly homosexual people, catalysed the emergence of the modern gay rights movement. An early target for activists was classification of homosexuality as a mental disorder in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual*, the diagnostic bible of the American Psychiatric Association (APA). Several years of mounting pressure from within and without led the APA to drop that classification in 1973.¹

Six months later, while at a conference in New York, at the age of 40 Isay walked into a seedy gay porn theatre. “Within a few minutes, because of the intensity of my sexual feelings, I realized that, in fact, I was homosexual,” he wrote in *Becoming Gay*, an account of his personal journey to accept himself, published in 1996. “For the first time, because my sexual feelings and impulses were so clear and powerful, I did not believe I was sick. I experienced a sense of relief and exhilaration. I knew that homosexuality was the passion I had believed myself incapable of ever experiencing.”

He told Jane that he was gay in 1980. They decided to keep it a secret and stay together for the sake of the children, then aged 10 and 14, for nearly a decade. Jane later wrote of the toll this secret took on the entire family.² Isay initially did not publicly disclose his homosexuality but began working with gay patients,



COURTESY OF GORDON HARRELL

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helping them come to terms with their orientation. He published *Being Homosexual* in 1989 in support of the premise that it is a normal variant of human development.

Isay pressed the APsaA to follow the APA and change its views on homosexuality. He became the first openly gay member of the association. Consequently, some colleagues shunned him and stopped referring patients to him. It was only in 1992, under threat of a lawsuit by Isay, with the support of the American Civil Liberties Union, that the APsaA agreed to adopt a non-discrimination statement protecting gay people from discrimination in training and advancement in the profession. “He changed the way the psychoanalytic world viewed the subject of homosexuality,” said Jack Drescher, a friend of Isay’s and a leading expert on homosexuality and psychiatry. “He was a pioneer, a very brave man. He was attacked by psychoanalysts. He took a lot of flak.”

In 1979 Isay began a relationship with Gordon Harrell, an artist nearly two decades younger, though he continued to live with his family until 1989. They wed last year, soon

after the state of New York legalised same sex marriage. His book *Commitment and Healing: Gay Men and the Need for Romantic Love*, published in 2006, drew heavily on the experience of that relationship. In a 2008 interview in the magazine *Weill Cornell Medicine* Isay said of the relationship, “We both prioritise the importance of a committed relationship for our happiness.”

Harrell told *Gay City News* magazine that they stayed together despite their differences. “We spoke between almost every patient, for over 30 years . . . We eventually became so close that we became part of each other—very happily halves of a greater whole.”

Sigmund Freud on his head

“Dick Isay stood Sigmund Freud on his head,” neurobiologist Simon LeVay told the newspaper. “Freud said it was problematic parent-child relationships that made a child gay; Isay said that it was the gayness of the child that made the parent-child relationship problematic.” Most in the profession have come around to Isay’s perspective.

Richard A Friedman, a colleague at Weill Cornell Medical Center, said that Isay “made the discipline see that their view was based on ideology, not evidence. He pushed the discipline to do what it should have done, and he did not stop. We’re all richer for it.” Last year the International Forum for Psychoanalytic Education selected Isay for the Hans W Loewald memorial award. The award recognises an individual’s stature “for original and outstanding contributions to the development of psychoanalytic theory, practice, and application.”

Richard Alexander Isay was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on 13 December 1934. He attended Haverford College and the University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry, going on to complete his psychiatric residency at Yale University, and further training at the Western New England Psychoanalytic Institute. He was clinical professor of psychiatry at Weill Cornell Medical College and lecturer in psychiatry at the Columbia University Center for Psychoanalytic Training and Research.

Isay died aged 77 in New York City. In addition to Harrell, he leaves his former wife, Jane, and two sons.

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References are in the version on bmj.com.

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Charles Alexander Russell Brown



Former general practitioner Garelochhead (b 1953; q Manchester 1977), d 14 November 2011.

Charles Alexander Russell Brown ("Charlie" or "CAR") did his house jobs in Kirkcaldy and spent a year in South Africa as senior house officer at Edendale Hospital. After returning to Scotland and completing GP training in Garelochhead, he worked in Lanark for three years. In 1985, after accepting an invitation to join the Garelochhead practice, he was diagnosed with Addison's disease. He refused to let this compromise the quality of care he gave his patients, and on occasion ran the practice singlehanded for extended periods at a time. He had a leading role in securing the new medical centre at Garelochhead, which opened in 2007. Charlie retired from general practice in 2010. He leaves his wife, Marion, whom he met at St Andrews; a son, Fergus; and a daughter, Helen. William Brown

Cite this as: BMJ 2012;345:e5663

Derek William Dawson



Former consultant haematologist North Manchester General Hospital (b 1925; q Edinburgh 1948; FRCP Ed, FRCPath), d 27 May 2012.

A house officer in 1948, Derek William Dawson met Aneurin Bevan, who was visiting various hospitals. Derek was appointed consultant haematologist in 1957 and served North Manchester General Hospital with distinction for 33 years. His research included the

absorption of vitamin B₁₂ and the assay of B₁₂ and folate. He had a leading role in putting up an international schedule for B₁₂ assay. He was the hospital's first postgraduate tutor, served a term as president of Manchester Medical Society's section of pathology, and for some years conducted a weekly seminar open to staff and students. He travelled widely and was secretly proud of his garden. His last eight months were marred by the consequences of a stroke. He leaves a civil partner. Philip Markman

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James Newell Duncan



Former general practitioner Ipswich (b 1945; q St Thomas' 1970), died from acute myeloid leukaemia on 13 May 2012.

After working in northern British Columbia for three years, James Newell Duncan ("Jim") settled in general practice in Ipswich. He did the first aspirin audit there and persuaded the primary care trust to roll out the programme to other local practices. He started up the local cooperatives for out of hours care and non-fundholding, and continued working as the chairman of the local commissioning group after retirement. When he was diagnosed as having acute myeloid leukaemia in August 2011, his faith in the NHS was confirmed by the excellent treatment he received, although this was unfortunately ultimately unsuccessful. He leaves his wife, Penelope; three children; and two grandchildren. Penelope Exley

Cite this as: BMJ 2012;345:e5668

Geoffrey Launcelot Kennedy

Former general practitioner Wisbech (b 1921; q Dublin 1945; BAO, LM, DObst RCOG, FRCGP), d 22 January 2012.



Geoffrey Launcelot Kennedy studied medicine at Trinity College Dublin. He joined a general practice in Wisbech, Cambridgeshire, in 1948, which is known today as the Clarkson Surgery. In 1970 he co-established the King's Lynn vocational training scheme for general practitioners. In 1978 he became provost of the East Anglia faculty of the Royal College of General Practitioners. He also held the position of clinical assistant at Bowthorpe Maternity Hospital in Wisbech and later that of associate specialist in obstetrics and gynaecology at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, King's Lynn, from which he retired in 1985. He played hockey for Leinster and Cambridgeshire and made medical films that were shown internationally. He leaves Geoffrey, Ann, Oonagh, Lisa, and grandchildren. Oonagh Cosgrove

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Philip Lee



Former consultant metabolic physician University of London College Hospitals (b 1963; q Nottingham 1986; DM, FRCP, FRCPath), died from lung cancer on 18 August 2011.

Philip Lee linked paediatrics and adult metabolic medicine at a time when increasing numbers of children with inborn errors were surviving into adulthood. He established the Charles Dent Metabolic Unit at University College Hospital in London and soon became an authority to whom many in the world would turn for advice. Philip trained in paediatrics at centres in Cardiff, Liverpool, and London. After being appointed to UCLH he enlarged

the unit. Although his workload increased substantially, he still obtained many grants and published extensively in a short time. Phil was an enthusiastic Chelsea FC supporter, cello player, bridge player, football referee, and founder of a local youth football club. He leaves his wife, Roz, and two children.

James Leonard

Cite this as: BMJ 2012;345:e5664

James Willis



Former consultant psychiatrist Guy's Hospital (b 1928; q London 1954; MA, FRCP Ed, FRCPsych), d 27 May 2012.

James Willis ("Jim") trained as a psychiatrist at Guy's and the Maudsley hospitals. He became consultant at Stone House and Warlingham hospitals before returning to Guy's in 1967 to run a new drug dependency service. In 1976 he left the NHS and returned to general psychiatry and neurology as head of psychiatry at King Faisal specialist hospital in Riyadh. In 1984 he returned to a consultant post in the NHS in Liverpool until he finally retired in 1987. He also worked for the World Health Organization and two US institutions. In 1974 his first book (*Lecture Notes in Psychiatry*) was published, running to seven editions during his authorship. He wrote three books on substance misuse and after retiring wrote five novels. He leaves his second wife, a son, and a daughter. Thomas Bewley

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