

Hamid Ghodse

Psychiatrist who helped shape policies on substance misuse and addiction worldwide

Abdol-Hamid Ghodse, professor of psychiatry and international drug policy (b 1938; q 1965 Tabriz University of Medical Sciences and Health Services), died from adenocarcinoma of the lung on 27 December 2012.

The implementation of the UK Misuse of Drugs Act 1967 proved to be an important moment in the career of Hamid Ghodse. The act, a response to concern over increasing numbers of drug users, led to the opening of drug dependency units, of which one of the first was at Hackney Hospital, east London. Ghodse, who was doing a psychiatric rotation at the hospital, took a job at the unit and from here grew his lifelong interest in addiction.

From Hackney he moved to the Maudsley Hospital in south London and then the Institute of Psychiatry, where he conducted epidemiological research, including a study of London casualty units to find out how many attendances were related to drug use. Ghodse was shocked to discover that 80 units in Greater London fielded 2000 drug related attendances a month, of which half were centred on a cluster of five central London hospitals.¹

The study's methods were adopted by the World Health Organization, and the results alerted the UK government to the impact that drug dependency was having on the capital's hospitals. Patients were then referred directly from casualty to the newly established City Roads drugs project.

Ilana Crome, emeritus professor of addiction psychiatry at Keele University, says that, alongside Griffith Edwards, the UK's first professor of addiction psychiatry (who died last year—see obituary at *BMJ* 2012;345:e7234), Ghodse was one of the pioneers of the specialty in the UK. "He would have been one of the first people who specialised in addiction psychiatry—one of the first and few. He was very influential in raising the profile and providing leadership," she says.

He was offered a consultant post at St George's Hospital in south London in 1978, where he built up the addiction unit from scratch to one that has more than 200 staff today. In 2004 he became the director of the International Centre for Drug Policy (ICDP) at St George's and retained that position until his death.

It was at St George's that he developed a test to determine opiate addiction by measuring



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the pupils of both eyes. He first collaborated with a pharmacologist who had expertise on the effect of drugs on the pupils and then with a medical physicist to develop a pupillometer. The test was a quick, non-invasive, and reliable method for measuring opiate dependence.²

In 2007 Ghodse succeeded in persuading the Department of Health to introduce substance misuse training into the undergraduate medical curriculum. The guidance notes on the new module, produced by the centre, encapsulate Ghodse's views: "Substance misuse is more than a specialised discipline concerned with treating addicts or an abstract issue of public health; it is one of the worst health problems in this country, which doctors will encounter many times each day."³

Crome says: "He was passionate about developing the field [of substance misuse]. He worked tirelessly to see the best outcomes for patients in a very demanding area, towards which there is still a lot of stigma and discrimination."

Ghodse, who was one of nine children, was born in Iran and first came to the UK to attend a scouting jamboree at the age of 19, travelling from Iran by coach. He was befriended by a family from Neath in south Wales, whom

he visited during his holidays as a student. When he arrived in the town, the local paper "welcomed my arrival with a photograph and column about my travels."⁴

After graduating he felt that the UK was the ideal place to work as a doctor and he lived with his Welsh family, as he called them, and got a job as a senior house officer in Bridgend. He remained proud of his Iranian heritage, and because Iran does not recognise dual nationality he never applied for a British passport.

Ghodse particularly enjoyed and valued his international work, first with WHO and then with the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB), a body that monitors countries' adherence to drug conventions. Ghodse was elected president of the board 11 times.

He also persuaded the Royal College of Psychiatrists to launch *International Psychiatry*—a journal that, while containing original research, was intended to be a window on to how psychiatry was practised around the world. Vanessa Cameron, chief executive of the royal college, described Ghodse as an internationalist and as "the wise elder statesman par excellence." She said he would often bring back gifts of Sachertorte—a rich chocolate cake made to a secret recipe at the Austrian Café Sacher—from his trips to Vienna with the INCB.

He was a member of innumerable committees and advisory boards and was still looking for positions up until his death, says his wife, Barbara. Colleagues speak of his phenomenal energy and how on trips abroad he kept going when others were flagging.

Andrés Finguerut, secretary of the INCB, remembers a man who was a skilled diplomat as well as always being immaculately turned out. In fact, he insisted on always wearing a suit and tie when treating his patients, even when it was the norm to dress down with addicts. He felt that all patients deserved respect, says Barbara Ghodse.

He didn't believe in legalising drugs, she adds, as he thought that all addicts should have the opportunity to be drug free.

He leaves his wife, Barbara, who trained as a doctor and then moved into hospital management; a daughter; and two sons.

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References are in the version on www.bmj.com.

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John Harwood Keen

Former consultant paediatrician Manchester (b 1930; q University Hospital London, 1954), d 6 July 2012.

John Harwood Keen was appointed consultant paediatrician at Booth Hall Children's Hospital and North Manchester General Hospital, and honorary lecturer in paediatrics at the University of Manchester in 1968.



He developed special interests in diabetes, child abuse, rheumatology, and spina bifida, retiring in 1990. With a colleague he established a rheumatology clinic at Booth Hall, which has evolved into the regional paediatric rheumatology service. He regularly attended and contributed to international meetings on children with spina bifida. He gave his time, experience, and skills to other professional roles and enjoyed a long and active retirement. He leaves Sue, his wife of 38 years, four children, and 10 grandchildren.

R J Postlethwaite, R D H Boyd

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Alan Avrom Naftalin

Former consultant obstetrician and gynaecologist Newham University Hospital NHS Trust (b 1949; q Glasgow 1972; FRCOG), died from myeloma on 10 December 2012.

Alan Avrom Naftalin served as director of medical education at his trust. His clinical interests were in colposcopy and fertility control. After his house jobs, he spent three years in Melbourne, where he met and married Doris (Blass), who had just graduated in medicine there. Back in the UK he became a consultant at Newham in 1984. He was secretary of the Jewish Medical Association (UK) for many years and president of the Barts and Royal London Medical School tennis section. A recent highlight was his selection as a torchbearer for the London Olympics. He leaves Doris and three children.

Nicholas Naftalin

[Cite this as: BMJ 2013;346:f914](#)

Robert Martin Nicholl



Former consultant anaesthetist Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast (b 1926; q Belfast 1952; MD, FFARCS), d 10 June 2012.

Robert Martin Nicholl ("Robbie") joined the Royal Marines in 1944 and was demobbed in 1946. In August 1952 he was houseman in the Royal Victoria Hospital and then senior house officer in anaesthetics. He spent time at the Royal Maternity Hospital on flying squad duty. In 1957 he worked at Waveney Hospital in Ballymena for two years. Later an opportunity arose to work at the Royal Victoria Hospital. This led to an MD thesis and appointment as consultant in 1966. Robbie spent most of his clinical time in ear, nose, and throat medicine and doing gynaecology theatre lists, until he retired in May 1992. He leaves his wife, Dorothy; three sons; and five grandchildren.

Richard Nicholl

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Geoffrey Donald Parbrook

Former consultant anaesthetist and senior lecturer Glasgow (b 1928; q Birmingham 1953; MD, FFARCS), died from a myocardial infarction on 22 November 2012.



After national service with the Royal Air Force Geoffrey Donald Parbrook ("Geoff") trained in anaesthesia. In 1962, while a senior registrar in Aberdeen, he carried out research into postoperative pain relief using premixed gases. In 1967 he was appointed as a consultant in Glasgow. He developed teaching courses for undergraduates and junior anaesthetists, particularly a course of audiotape slide programmes,

in conjunction with a physicist and graphic designer. These programmes formed the nucleus of the 1982 book *Basic Physics and Measurement in Anaesthesia*, which went on to several editions. Geoff had a lifelong interest in chess and was also a magician, who regularly entertained at children's parties. He leaves a wife, Evelyn; three sons; and seven grandchildren.

Evelyn Parbrook, Alick Reid

[Cite this as: BMJ 2013;346:f916](#)

Christopher Patrick Silver

Consultant in geriatric medicine London Hospital and Tower Hamlets Health District (b 1920; q Oxford 1942; MA, DM, FRCP), d 12 November 2012.



Christopher Patrick Silver qualified in the war, served with the Royal Army Medical Corps, and subsequently took up chest medicine. However, a colleague nudged him towards geriatric medicine, in which he excelled. He started in the Dickensian surroundings of St Matthew's Hospital in Shoreditch, later acquiring patients in three other hospitals in London's East End. He modernised patient care and provided a geriatric service to patients and GPs of Tower Hamlets. With a psychogeriatrician colleague, he opened a mixed geriatric and psychogeriatric ward at the London Hospital (Mile End). By the time of his retirement, he was sharing patient care at the London (Whitechapel) with the professor of medicine. Predeceased by his wife, Nancy, he leaves a son, three daughters, and grandchildren.

Colin Reisner

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Rhona Watkins

Consultant in haematology and transfusion medicine Gartnavel General Hospital, Glasgow (b 1953; q Glasgow 1977; MD, FRCPath), died from complications after treatment for cervical carcinoma on 19 November 2012.



Rhona Watkins was the medical manager of the Scottish National Blood Transfusion Service's blood donor care programme, the apheresis service, and the British Bone Marrow Registry. She was a highly sought after teacher and a member of the training group of the Scottish National Blood Transfusion Service. After her diagnosis of cervical carcinoma in November 2010 she initially responded to treatment and hoped to return to work. However, complications meant that most of the last eight months of her life were spent either in the Beatson Cancer Centre in Glasgow or in St Andrew's Hospice, Airdrie. Predeceased by her mother, she leaves her father.

Alan Hutchison

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John Hodgson Willis

General practitioner Brigg, North Lincolnshire (b 1925; q St Mary's 1952), died from a stroke on 10 January 2013.

During house jobs in Cambridge, John Hodgson Willis met his future wife, Moreen. In 1953, the couple took over a singlehanded practice in Lincolnshire, where they stayed until 1988. John did all his own on-call for many years, including regular midwifery at home and in the cottage hospital. He embraced new ideas—such as acupuncture, which he studied in Sri Lanka—and he was an early user of computerised medical records. A much loved mentor for a succession of young people, many of whom he spotted and helped at a difficult time, he was also famous as an author of witty poems to suit all occasions. Predeceased by Moreen in 1988, he leaves four children and 13 grandchildren.

Ted Willis

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