

Joep Lange

Pioneering HIV/AIDS researcher and advocate for global treatment

Joseph “Joep” Lange (b 1954; q 1981 University of Amsterdam), was one of 298 passengers who died on 17 July 2014 when Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 crashed in Ukraine.

In June this year, three months before turning 60, Joep Lange was on a plane, chatting with a colleague about his work. Lange had spent most of his adult life on HIV/AIDS—as a pioneer researcher helping to understand the basic pathology of the virus, as a caring doctor, and as a determined advocate for HIV/AIDS patients around the world, especially in Africa.

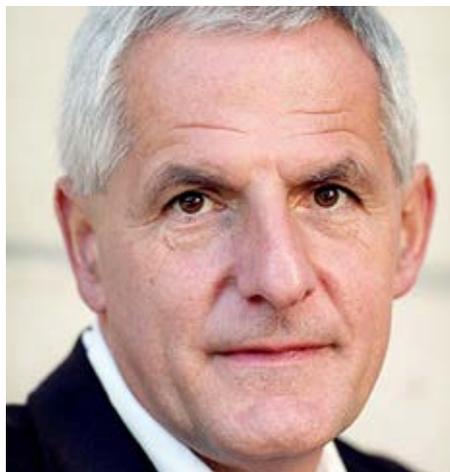
But after three decades of hard work, Lange knew that the battle against HIV/AIDS had not been won—and was not even close to being won. There was still much to be done, still millions and millions of suffering people he wanted to help. Lange would need more time. Lange’s colleague on the flight, Jacques van der Gaag, professor of development economics at the University of Amsterdam, noted that it is now normal to continue working beyond the traditional retirement age of 65. He told Lange: “You still have at least 10 more productive years in you.”

Lange replied: “But that is not enough.”

On 17 July Lange boarded a plane in Amsterdam to travel as a delegate to the 20th International AIDS Conference in Melbourne. With him on board was his partner, Jacqueline van Tongeren, and at least four other delegates to the conference. In an unimaginable horror, the plane—Malaysia Airlines flight MH17—crashed in Ukraine after apparently being shot down. All 283 passengers and 15 crew members died.

“Joep Lange is no more,” says Agnes van Ardenne, former Dutch minister for development cooperation, adding: “But his dream will live on.” She described Lange as “a towering example of humanity” who was on a “quest to establish the right to healthcare for everyone . . . everywhere.”

Known and respected worldwide for his expertise on HIV/AIDS, Lange served from 1992 to 1995 as chief of clinical research and drug development for the World Health Organization’s Global Programme on AIDS, and from 2002 to 2004 as president of the International AIDS Society (IAS). At the time of his death, he was professor of medicine and head of the global health department at the University of Amsterdam’s Academic Medical Centre (AMC) and executive scientific director of



the Amsterdam Institute for Global Health and Development (AIGHD). He held seemingly countless other positions and served on editorial boards of several scientific journals. When he spoke, people listened—even those who disagreed.

Joseph Marie Albert Lange was born on 25 September 1954 in Nieuwenhagen, the Netherlands. In the autumn of 1971, he travelled to the USA to spend a school year as a foreign exchange student at a high school in Tampa, Florida. He had long hair and he liked Bob Dylan, according to classmates interviewed by a Tampa newspaper after his death.¹ A daughter of a family with whom he stayed remembers receiving a special present from him on her 13th birthday: the *White Album* by the Beatles. Lange returned to the high school in 2012 for the 40 year reunion of his class.

Lange studied medicine at the University of Amsterdam, earning his medical degree in 1981 and a PhD in 1987. Specialising in infectious diseases at AMC, he became interested in HIV/AIDS in 1983, two years after the mysterious disease had first been clinically

observed in the US. The next year he was co-author of a paper concerning AIDS published in the *Lancet*.² The pace of his research output accelerated dramatically after he earned his PhD in 1987, and at the time of his death he had published nearly 400 papers.

The most important papers he co-authored include a study of 14 men with HIV who did not develop AIDS for at least two years.³ Another, published in 1989, followed the progression and changes of the HIV virus in 20 men with no symptoms until immunodeficiency occurred.⁴ Perhaps

his most important HIV paper was published in 1992 in the *Journal of Virology*, it indicated that the virus was concealed in certain types of white blood cells.⁵ The paper has been cited more than 1000 times.

Through his research, Lange became convinced that the most effective treatment of HIV should include use of at least three antiretroviral drugs, known as triple antiretroviral therapy. In 1994 at the European AIDS Clinical Society meeting in Milan, at a time when many leading experts were sceptical of antiretroviral therapy, Lange argued that only an array of drugs with different mechanisms could combat the virus effectively, urging clinicians to start treatment as early as possible. He also was recognised for his work on the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV.

In 1992, in preparation for his job at WHO, Lange travelled to Africa for the first time. He wanted “to see the epicentre of the HIV/AIDS epidemic.” The visit, he wrote in a contribution for an upcoming booklet on HIV/AIDS research in Africa, “turned out to be a life changing event.”

In Uganda, he toured Makerere University’s Mulago Hospital, accompanied by Elly T Katabira, who would become “a close friend and steady collaborator,” and who is now an associate professor at the university. Lange “was shocked to see the internal medicine wards almost entirely occupied by people with AIDS, two in each bed, and many lying on mattresses on the floor. At regular intervals, I saw how people who had just died were being carried away. Besides a lack of running water, there were virtually no diagnostic tools and little to no medicines.” Lange adds: “It . . . became my mission to do something about the terrible global inequality in access to life-saving medicines.”

In 2000 Lange founded PharmAccess to promote affordable healthcare in Africa. Frustrated about the lack of global commitment from policy makers and global organisations to supply adequate HIV/AIDS drugs for Africa, he famously said: “These drugs have saved hundreds of thousands of lives in Europe and the United States. They could do the same for millions more in developing countries. If we can get cold Coca-Cola and beer to every remote corner of Africa, it should not be impossible to do the same with drugs.”

Lange leaves four daughters, and a son.

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References are in the version on thebmj.com.

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Ian Duthie Adams



Former consultant in accident and emergency medicine St James's Hospital, Leeds (b 1931; q Leeds 1956; MD, FFAEM, Dip.Sports Med), died from metastatic prostate cancer on 13 March 2014.

Ian Duthie Adams became consultant in accident and emergency medicine at St James's in 1974. As medical officer to Leeds United Football Club for 13 years he had completed his MD, on osteoarthritis of the knee joint in sportsmen, while working in general practice. The sports medicine clinic he established at St James's was the first in the NHS, but lack of funding led to its closure after 13 years. Medical officer for international athletics, gymnastics, cricket, and karate, he lectured in sports medicine in Europe, the Philippines, and South Africa. He was elected chairman of the British Association of Sports and Exercise Medicine and to the executive of the European Federation of Sports Medicine Associations. Predeceased by June, his wife of 55 years, he leaves a daughter, a son, and three grandsons.

Jane Piggott

Cite this as: [BMJ 2014;349:g4463](#)

Charles James Barton Anderson

Former consultant general surgeon (b 1918; q Aberdeen 1940; FRCS Ed), d 15 February 2014

After wartime service in the army, Charles James Barton Anderson obtained a surgical training post in Aberdeen, where he met and married Margaret, who was a theatre sister there. He was appointed consultant surgeon in Shetland, where he stayed for three years, providing a singlehanded surgical service to the island population. He then became consultant general surgeon at Arbroath Hospital in Angus, where the quality of the service he provided was exemplified by the number of doctors from the neighbouring city of Dundee who made for Arbroath when they had

a surgical problem themselves. Charles taught undergraduates in Dundee and Arbroath. He was an examiner for the fellowship examination of the Royal College of Surgeons in Edinburgh. He leaves his wife, Margaret; three children; and five grandchildren.

Robert Anderson

Cite this as: [BMJ 2014;349:g4467](#)

Peter Cook



Former general practitioner (b 1947; q Sheffield 1970; FRCGP), died from oesophageal cancer on 3 April 2014

Peter Cook joined East Birmingham general practice vocational training scheme (VTS) in 1974 and then moved to south Yorkshire, when he became a principal in general practice in 1977. He quickly fitted into the practice and community, and he married Christine in 1978. They adopted two children, Helen and James. Peter's interest in general practice led him to become a successful trainer in the Doncaster VTS and in 2001 he was honoured with the fellowship of the Royal College of General Practitioners. He was a Christian who thought deeply and carefully about his beliefs. He retired in 2007 and was able to enjoy classical music and theatre, and to see his family married and settled, with children of their own. He leaves Christine, two children, and two grandchildren.

Richard Buckle

Cite this as: [BMJ 2014;349:g4469](#)

Bertram Galloway Forrest

Consultant anaesthetist (b 1921; q St Andrews University 1949; DA Lond), d 21 May 2014.

Bertram Galloway Forrest was born in Bombay and was educated at Loretto School in Edinburgh. The second world war, during which he served as a captain in the Royal Army Medical Corps from 1945 to 1948, interrupted his studies. After serving in India, Burma, and Palestine, he returned to his studies and qualified. One of his

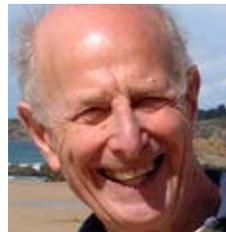


first positions was at the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital, where he met and married Brenda Easey in 1951. After a position in Dundee, he and his family settled in Rotherham, and he worked largely at Rotherham's Doncaster Gate and Moorgate hospitals. After retiring he and Brenda moved back to Norfolk. Forrest was a keen member of Lindrick Golf Club and an enthusiastic fly fisherman. Predeceased by Brenda in 2006, he leaves three children.

Robin Forrest

Cite this as: [BMJ 2014;349:g4465](#)

Michael David Arthur Heller



Former consultant child psychiatrist Royal Alexandra Hospital, Brighton, and director Colwood Adolescent Unit, Haywards Heath, Sussex (b 1927; q St Mary's Hospital 1951; FRCP, FRCPsych), died from disseminated carcinoma of the bowel on 15 June 2013.

After qualifying and doing national service in Scotland, Michael David Arthur Heller ("Mike") initially trained in general medicine in London. He then pursued a career in child psychiatry, working at Springfield and the Maudsley hospitals. After being appointed consultant child psychiatrist in Brighton, he planned and opened one of the UK's first psychiatric units for adolescents in Haywards Heath. A proud fellow of two royal colleges, he was delighted that his two eldest sons and two of his grandchildren have become doctors. Mike devoted much of his retirement to caring for his wife, Betty, who died in 2006. He leaves his six children and 16 grandchildren.

Simon Heller, Andrew Heller

Cite this as: [BMJ 2014;349:g4468](#)

Anthony Promnitz



Consultant physician in respiratory and general medicine Ipswich Hospital (b 1955; q University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa, 1979 (cum laude); FACC, FRCPSG, FRCP, FMCSA), died from prostate cancer on 27 June 2013.

Douglas Anthony Promnitz held numerous positions in his native South Africa, including that of principal specialist and head of the division of pulmonology at Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital. He emigrated to the UK in 1996, worked in Scotland and at Hinchbrook Hospital, until he took up a post at Ipswich Hospital the end of 2003, where he worked until his illness forced him into early retirement in August 2012. By his own admission he was "not a politician," and he was acutely aware of, and sensitive to, discrimination in the workplace. Anthony received the news of his diagnosis in the middle of a bronchoscopy procedure list—which he went on to complete nonetheless. Having borne his illness with courage, acceptance, and dignity, he leaves his companion, Barry.

Ronald Sproat

Michelle Wong

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