

William Asscher

Former dean of St George's medical school and expert on urinary tract infections

Professor Sir Adolf William Asscher, consultant nephrologist (b 1930; q University of London 1957), died from bowel cancer on 20 July 2014.

When William Asscher arrived in Cardiff in the mid-1960s after training and house jobs in London, renal medicine was still in its infancy, with just one kidney dialysis machine serving the whole of Wales. Asscher worked first as a general physician but soon developed an interest in this new specialty. A group of businessmen had raised money to buy a dialysis machine but were instructed by the professor of medicine at Cardiff Royal Infirmary that their money would be better directed towards research. This led to the creation of the Kidney Research Unit Foundation for Wales (KRUF).

Asscher was asked to lead the foundation, and here he developed his research interests—primarily the prevention of renal failure through the identification of people with undetected urinary tract infections (UTIs). He published some 200 papers on UTIs, as well as authoring textbooks, and he became a world expert on the subject.

Asscher had carried out a randomised control trial of a cohort of schoolgirls with asymptomatic bacteriuria (ASB). With Kate Verrier Jones, a young clinician, he then carried out a series of studies to follow up this cohort and demonstrate that girls with ASB did not experience worse health, higher blood pressure, more complex pregnancies, or more kidney failure than other children or adults, whether or not they had treatment.

John Williams, who succeeded Asscher at the foundation, credits Asscher's success in persuading the Welsh Office to set up regional dialysis

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units to his political astuteness. Asscher was impressed by the German *Kuratorium* system, where dialysis machines were set up in small towns, and took this idea to the Welsh Office. Wales's system of regional dialysis units was the first in the UK, says Williams, and for a long time, dialysis rates were much higher in Wales than they were in the rest of the country. He describes Asscher as a facilitator and an enabler, "an intelligent bloke who could listen and make positive comments and suggestions."

Asscher was born in the Netherlands in 1931, to a family of Jewish extraction. After the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands, the



Asscher family was deported to the transit camp of Westerbork in the north east of the country, from where Jews were sent to concentration camps. Asscher's mother persuaded the authorities that the family was English and in fact not Jewish at all—a completely fabricated tale. She also used William's blond, Aryan looks to aid the family's cause. The family's case was taken up by a Dutch lawyer, and in 1943 the Asschers became some of the fortunate few to be released. As an adult, Asscher rarely spoke of this period of his life.

The family remained in the Netherlands until 1947, when Asscher's father took a job in London with the oil firm Shell. Asscher went to school in west London and, after failing to get into medical school first time round, did his national service in the Royal Engineers. In 1951 he got a place to study medicine at the University of London.

His first wife died when the couple had been married for barely a year, and he met his second wife, Jennifer Lloyd, while they were students.

Malcolm Davies, a pharmacologist at the kidney research unit from its earliest days, says that as a boss, Asscher was supportive and keen to help his staff in their careers. "He was ambitious, but he was also ambitious for his staff," says Davies, describing how he would introduce them to important and useful

people and procure invitations to conferences and scientific meetings.

Asscher's personal ambitions were realised in 1988, when he was made dean of St George's medical school at the University of London. This was a busy time, and his longest standing legacy here was setting up a joint venture between St George's and Kingston University for the training of medical students with nursing, midwifery, physiotherapy, and radiography students. Most of the faculty were against the partnership—they were concerned about medical students training with what they saw as lowly nurses as well as the partnership with a former polytechnic—but Asscher drove it through. The venture secured St George's financial future, and also set a precedent for interprofessional training.

Frank Hay, vice principal at St George's at the time, describes Asscher as charming and persuasive without resorting to bullying, and able to deal with difficult situations. The case of Malcolm Pearce—senior obstetric consultant at St George's who claimed to have reimplanted an ectopic pregnancy that led to the delivery of a healthy baby—was one such difficult case (bmj.310.6994.1554a). Pearce's claims, published in the *British Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology*, unsurprisingly sparked worldwide media attention. Colleagues blew the whistle, however, saying they had been unaware of this research, and no patient could be found. Asscher had to deal with the fallout of this case.

Hay describes Asscher as one of the last of the old-school deans, who knew all his students by name and would pull them up if they were not performing well. During this period he was also chair of the Committee on Safety of Medicines, for which he was awarded a knighthood.

His daughters describe a father with a great sense of humour and a glint in his eye. Asscher worked hard, but Sundays with the family were sacrosanct. He was a keen sportsman, enjoying the annual family skiing holiday, as well as tennis, and watching Cardiff City football club. He was also good at table tennis, a skill he developed during the war when he was forced to spend so much time inside. In his retirement he took up painting and left more than 40 works of art.

He leaves his two daughters.

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John A Anderson



Former general practitioner Shildon, County Durham (b 1926; q Durham 1949), died from congestive cardiac failure on 25 March 2014.

John A Anderson lived all his life in Shildon, where his father was a partner in the long established family practice. After qualifying, John married Sheila and did his national service in the Royal Army Medical Corps in Jamaica, after which he joined the family practice. He retired in 1988 after giving 37 years of service to the local community, where he was very much respected. In his retirement, he continued to do medical boards for some years. He and Sheila enjoyed walking in the Lake District and Yorkshire Dales, visiting his son and family in America, and spending time with his daughter and family. Sheila died in 2013. John leaves his son, his daughter, and four grandchildren.

RB Malcolm

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Margaret E M O'Flynn (Foley)



Consultant gynaecologist (b 1920; q 1943; FRCOG), d 22 September 2014.

Margaret O'Flynn (known professionally as Foley) followed her first husband, John Foley, to Portsmouth. She was instrumental in setting up a specialised, purpose built unit for contraceptive services for increasing numbers of patients, created annual training weekends for the family planning doctors and GPs, and called on the expertise of her medical friends for teaching. She worked as a consultant gynaecologist in Abu Dhabi for a year and on her return was offered a post at St Mary's Hospital in Paddington. By this time, however,

after her first husband's death in 1972, Margaret had married Garry O'Flynn, a GP, and returned to the Portsmouth area, where she continued her work as head of contraceptive and sexual health services for the region until she retired. Predeceased by both her husbands, she leaves four children; five stepchildren; and many grandchildren, step grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Fiona Foley Croft

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Philip Holland



Consultant paediatrician Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust (b 1948; q University College Hospital, London, 1973; FRCPH), died from metastatic carcinoma of the oesophagus on 20 June 2014.

Before medical school, Philip Holland undertook Voluntary Service Overseas in Zambia, working as an assistant game warden and establishing a lifelong love of travel. During his postgraduate training in Oxford he developed a lasting interest in bone disease. His desire to improve both services for patients and training for junior doctors found an outlet once he was appointed as a consultant in Leeds in 1989. He guided the child health committee at Leeds General Infirmary with good humour. He took on time consuming leadership roles, including the setting up of the highly successful "Yorkshire School of Paediatrics," aimed at providing high quality training to all junior doctors in Yorkshire. He leaves his wife, Jenny; five children; and seven grandchildren.

John Puntis

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Gareth Hughes

Consultant geriatrician (b 1932; q Liverpool 1955), d 11 November 2013.

Gareth Hughes graduated as consultant physician and then turned to elderly care, championing this cause for the rest of his life. He moved his young family to Glasgow in order to work and train, and

subsequently was appointed to a senior post in Dundee. In 1969 he and the family returned to Wales, to Aberystwyth, where he took the post of consultant geriatrician and became a much valued and respected physician and teacher. He founded the Aberystwyth stroke club (and later became its president), which continues to support people in the community who have had a stroke and their carers. In his retirement, he enjoyed gardening, walking the hills of Wales, and caravanning. He leaves Gwen, his wife of 57 years; two sons; two daughters; and grandchildren.

Gwenno Hughes

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Felix Mann



Doctor and acupuncturist (b 1931; q Cambridge 1955), d 2 October 2014.

Felix Mann was founder and past president of the Medical Acupuncture Society, first president of the British Medical Acupuncture Society, and the author of several successful books on the subject. He was medical assistant to Jean Scoch in Strasbourg, whose anthroposophical thinking encouraged doctors to continue to observe phenomena faithfully, even when no explanation or underlying theory is on offer. He studied acupuncture in Munich, Vienna, and Montpellier, and finally in China, where he learnt to read Chinese. He did not seem to mind what most of the rest of the medical profession thought of his apparent unorthodoxy and was awarded the German Society for Pain Management's pain prize in 1995. He leaves his wife, Ruth, and many grateful patients.

Alexander MacDonald

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Trevor Paes

General and vascular surgeon (b 1953; q Barts 1978; MS, FRCS), d 24 September 2014.

Trevor Paes was born in Dar es Salaam, where his father was the personal

physician to Julius Nyerere and his mother was minister of education. He followed a degree in chemistry at Imperial College, London, with a medical qualification. Trevor worked as a general and vascular surgeon at Hillingdon, Mount Vernon, Bishops Wood, Clementine Churchill, and Harefield hospitals. He also built up a private practice, becoming a foremost expert in the surgical treatments of excessive sweating and blushing. A skilled and competent surgeon, he was working up to the day he was taken ill with a ruptured aortic valve. Trevor managed a very busy professional life, but he also enjoyed chess, looking after his dog, and gardening. He leaves two children.

Tony James

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Margaret West



Consultant community paediatrician Macclesfield (b 1937; q Victoria University of Manchester 1960; DCH, DPH), d 14 July 2014.

Educated at Hulme Grammar School in Oldham, Margaret West went to medical school in 1954, one of the youngest in her year. She trained in public health in Oldham. In 1968 she married Michael West, had two sons, and was appointed community paediatrician with a special interest in child development at Macclesfield in 1974, a post she held until 1995. In 1998 Margaret and Michael retired to Ashbocking, Suffolk, where she became active in the Women's Institute and the Conservative Association. An expert flower arranger, she died shortly after returning from a flower festival in Dublin, and the 100 or so people representing all her activities at her funeral on 1 August showed the great affection and respect in which she was held. She leaves Michael; two sons; and seven grandchildren.

Rosemary Ellerby

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