

Brian Pentecost

Introduced specialist coronary care and formalised the training of junior doctors

Brian Leonard Pentecost, consultant cardiologist (b 1934; q University of London 1957; OBE, FRCP Lond, MD Lond), died from complications of a stroke on 15 January 2015.

Brian Pentecost became a consultant cardiologist at the age of just 32, at a time when cardiology was a relatively young speciality. Patients who had heart attacks were treated on general medical wards—rather than in specialist coronary units—and there was little in the way of drugs and treatment: it was simply watch and wait.

At the time of his appointment at Birmingham General Hospital in 1965, coronary care units were a relatively new innovation—the first ones were set up in the late 1950s and early 60s—but Pentecost realised the potential of bringing together specialist units and research. He set up one of the first coronary care units in a side room in a district general hospital, eventually persuading the hospital authorities to provide him with a proper ward, with about six beds.

Birmingham had a world class diabetes research team, and Pentecost carried out research looking at the effects of heart attacks on diabetes patients. He also undertook studies on mortality outcomes and potential treatments for patients with myocardial infarctions—such as thrombolysis, and the enzyme streptokinase.

Pentecost was an early advocate of the multidisciplinary team, working in partnership with the senior nurses at a time when most doctors felt themselves to be superior to them. Birmingham General was a small, close knit hospital inspiring great loyalty among its staff, as well as a friendly professional rivalry with its neighbour, the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Pentecost told a colleague that if he was leaving a shift and someone asked him to come back to see a patient he would do so without question.

Indeed, he and many other consultants returned to work on the night of 21 November 1974, when they heard that IRA bombs had gone off in two central Birmingham pubs, killing 21 people and injuring 182. Pentecost, alongside other consultants, worked through the night treating injured patients.

Pentecost was born in Barmehurst, Kent, to a station master father and seamstress mother, and was the first in his family to go to university. He wanted to be a doctor from a



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young age and won a state scholarship to study at St Mary's Hospital in London, where he won the medical and pathology prizes as well as the silver medal for the whole of London. He was hard working and ambitious, and keen to show his gratitude to his parents who had made sacrifices to ensure he got into medical school.

He then got a house job at St Mary's, where he met his wife, Jan, who was working as a nurse. He did his national service in Germany and on his return to London worked at Hammersmith Hospital under Sir John McMichael, who carried out pioneering work into the causes of heart failure. McMichael spotted his ambitious and bright trainee's potential, encouraging him to apply for the consultant post in Birmingham. Before taking up his appointment he spent about a year at Massachusetts General Hospital in the United States.

"Our Nijinsky"

When he arrived in Birmingham, John Malins, senior physician at the hospital, referred to Pentecost as "our Nijinsky," after the racehorse (rather than the dancer) because of his swift rise up the medical ranks.

Colleagues describe Pentecost as someone who had both intellectual and physical "presence." He was fiercely intelligent, with a natural authority, as well as being tall and elegant, with a gold plated stethoscope habitually slung around his neck.

He was postgraduate dean for the West Midlands and also became the Linacre fellow at the Royal College of Physicians, where he set up a department that was instrumental in developing a much more professional approach to monitoring the training and development of junior doctors. Before this, trainees simply watched what their seniors were doing, whereas Pentecost believed that it was important to have a more rigorous approach and an understanding of whether doctors were being trained properly. He enjoyed teaching and was awarded an honorary professorship.

In the early 1990s Birmingham's hospitals were reorganised, and the General became part of the new children's hospital. Pentecost knew that it was in patients' best interests for the hospitals to merge but decided to take a new appointment, as medical director of the British Heart Foundation, a post he filled from 1993 to 1996.

Health charities often witness a tension between their research and advocacy roles, and Pentecost wanted to ensure that research was at the forefront of the charity's goals. Alongside the director general of the charity, Leslie Busk, he ensured that three quarters of the charity's income should go on research, with the remaining quarter spent on care and education.

The charity received £65m in capital funding, and the pair asked the charity's 25 professors to apply for grants to update their laboratories and buy new pieces of equipment. These newly updated laboratories meant that the foundation could now compete with the pharmaceutical companies in attracting the best researchers. This focus on high quality research and facilities sowed the seeds for the charity's current status as the biggest funder of cardiovascular research in Europe. While Pentecost was at the foundation he was awarded the OBE.

In his retirement he enjoyed golf and skiing, and loved his garden. He was not, however, the type to spend his retirement in the potting shed, and in 2001 he became chair of the Royal Medical Benevolent Fund. During his tenure he oversaw the development of the telephone befriending scheme (now the PhoneFriends service) and the support4doctors.org and money4medstudents.org websites.

He leaves his wife, Jan, and three children.
Anne Gulland, London annegulland@yahoo.co.uk
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Paul L Allan



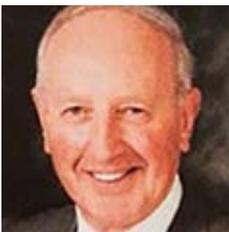
Consultant radiologist Edinburgh (b 1950; q 1974; DMRD, FRCR, FRCP Ed), d 12 January 2015.

In 1983 Paul Allan was appointed senior lecturer in medical radiology and honorary consultant radiologist (transferring to a NHS consultant post in 1999) at the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh, with the remit of developing diagnostic ultrasound. His other main clinical interest was abdominal imaging. He published prolifically, obtained £3m in research grants, was heavily involved in medical education, and held positions in the Royal College of Radiologists and the Scottish Radiological Society in 2004-6. Paul became clinical director of radiology at the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh in 2000, and he subsequently extended his remit to include the other radiology departments in Lothian. Over the past 12 months he started to prepare for retirement. He leaves his wife, Helen, and two sons.

Ian Beggs

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Michael Roger Bewsher



Former general practitioner Biggar (b 1930; q University of Edinburgh 1957), d 10 November 2014.

After junior hospital posts in Edinburgh, Michael Roger Bewsher (“Mike”) spent all of his working life as a general practitioner in Biggar in the Scottish Borders. With four partners, the practice covered several hundred square miles of border country, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Mike was all that a GP should be and was sorely missed when he retired. He

enjoyed country sports, especially game shooting. His first wife, Fiona, died some years ago. His second wife, Anne, cared for him during his final years of Parkinson’s disease. He leaves four daughters.

Robert Leitch, Alasdair Geddes

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Margaret Cooper



Clinical assistant (b 1959; q St Bartholomew’s Hospital 1984), died suddenly in her sleep on 13 December 2014.

Margaret Cooper (“Maggie”) originally started her career in anaesthetics but, having spent time in general practice, she developed an interest in genitourinary medicine and sexual health, which led to a career change. After clinical assistant posts and a registrar post in genitourinary medicine, she entered into full time clinical assistant posts at St Bartholomew’s Hospital, London, and St Peter’s Hospital, Chertsey. Her particular interest was in preventive medicine, with a strong ambition to teach sexual health and preventive medicine in the community. She would always provide 100% support to others if they were in difficult situations. She leaves her husband, Jonathan, and a daughter.

Phillip Adrian Evans

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Keir Hall Fisher

Former general practitioner Bildeston, Suffolk. (b 1933; q Glasgow 1960; MRCPGP; DObst RCOG), died from lymphoma on 21 December 2014.



While training as a general practitioner in Kilmacolm, Keir Hall was talking to a lawyer, who also acted for two Scottish GPs in rural England and were looking for a third partner. As a result he spent 30 happy years in Bildeston, Suffolk, as a GP partner, but he also found time to fully participate in local life. After retiring in 1993, he and his wife, Joyce—a former school teacher—returned to live in Glasgow, where they became active in many aspects of Glasgow life. For the last few years he cared for Joyce, who died in 2013. In 2012 he developed mantle cell lymphoma, which after treatment went into remission. He leaves his sister, four nieces, and one nephew.

Mac Speake, Peter von Kaehne

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Evelyne Margaret Tyson Glen



Former general practitioner Edinburgh and member Highland Research Group (b 1929; q Glasgow University 1955), died from Alzheimer’s disease on 6 March 2014.

Evelyne Margaret Tyson Glen (née Fisher) qualified in the same year as her husband, Iain. When he was stationed in the Far East for national service, the couple moved to Hong Kong, where she helped set up the Hong Kong blood transfusion service. Back in the UK, after the birth of her four children, she went back to clinical practice, working part time as a general practitioner. In later years she lived at Dalnavert, near Aviemore, while helping to set up and run the Psychiatric Highland Research group in Inverness. Predeceased by her husband in 2013, Evelyne leaves four children and eight grandchildren.

Dugald Glen

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Alasdair James Cameron Sneddon



General practitioner Buckhaven, Leven, Fife (b 1956; q 1981), d 23 April 2014.

Alasdair James Cameron Sneddon knew he was Scottish, so the calamity of being born in England was rectified by studying medicine in St Andrews. He married Joan, and a succession of small boys born in the remoter parts of Scotland followed. Having started in surgery he diversified into general practice. Alasdair’s talents flourished despite the increasing burden of general practice, while he encouraged Joan and the three boys through university. Chairing the local medical committee was another commitment; a vain attempt to make things better. Alasdair Sneddon died at his desk, just when retirement was within his sights. He leaves his wife, Joan, and three sons.

Ann Flynn

Cite this as: [BMJ 2015;350:h1455](#)

William Kinnear Stewart

Consultant physician Dundee (b 1926; q St Andrews 1948; MD, PhD, FRCP Lon, FRCP Ed), d 23 February 2014.

William Kinnear Stewart (“Bill”) trained in Dundee and remained there for his professional life, with the exception of national service in the Royal Navy and a year in Boston, working with Arnold Relman. He was sent from Dundee to the London Hospital to learn about the new technique of haemodialysis, the deal being sealed with Bill being entrusted with a supply of haemalum to replenish stocks at the pathology department at the London. He set up the dialysis service for Tayside and beyond, making his own artificial kidneys and being the sole consultant for over two decades. He published extensively despite a busy clinical load. Although a bachelor, he had many female friends, and in his spare time enjoyed playing the stock market.

Michael G Bamber

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