

Dan Tunstall Pedoe

The “father of marathon medicine”

Dan Tunstall Pedoe (b 1939; q 1964; MA, DPhil, FRCP), died from a heart attack aged 75 on 13 February 2015.

Dan Tunstall Pedoe is seen by many worldwide as the “father of marathon medicine,” whose skill and foresight created new opportunities for countless ordinary runners. The cardiologist and physician also achieved long sought improvements in healthcare for patients in deprived east London. Known affectionately as “Dr Dan,” Tunstall Pedoe, a keen runner himself, became the first medical director of the London Marathon in 1981, when he was sought out by athlete and event cofounder Chris Brasher. At that first race, he was the only doctor supporting 7500 runners with the help of two physiotherapists, one podiatrist, and a handful of St John Ambulance volunteers.

“Dr Dan was strongly of the opinion that the London marathon need not be confined to the most elite athletes and should be a people’s marathon for all comers,” says Sanjay Sharma, a fellow consultant cardiologist, who succeeded him in the role. “The participation of 35 000 runners each year over the past decade is a testament of his commitment to achieve this goal,” he says.

Tunstall Pedoe recognised that the marathon was a healthy event for most, but remained a challenge for some. He required anyone with a known heart condition or who experienced shortness of breath during light exercise to see a doctor before continuing with their training. He also required all competitors to complete a 15 mile [24.1 km] run shortly before race day.¹

For 27 years Tunstall Pedoe played a pivotal role in an event whose medical team now has over 100 doctors, several hundred physios and podiatrists, and some 1500 first-aiders. “His lobbying for safe levels of fluid intake during endurance exercise led to a dramatic reduction in serious problems from exercise associated hyponatraemia,” says Sharma, a professor at St George’s University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

It has also been said that the numbers of successful cardiac resuscitations famously made the London Marathon “one of the safest places in Britain to have a heart condition.”² Nick Bitel, the event’s chief executive since 1995, said: “Dr Dan really set the framework for what everyone does” regarding medical support. He said that experts who regularly convened at a pre-London marathon medical conference organised by the medical director “all saw him really as the father of marathon medicine.”



Tunstall Pedoe built up a thriving cardiology department virtually from scratch and carried out research into non-invasive techniques using ultrasound to measure blood velocity

Tom Evans, a consultant cardiologist who was part of the St John team that were asked to provide support along the 26 mile [42.2 km] route, recalls, “At that stage I think most of us didn’t know very much about marathon running. [Dan] took time and went to great pains to talk through the problems that can occur with marathon runners. He was an absolute gentleman—delightful, charming, and inspiring to work with.” Tunstall Pedoe would go on to set up the London Sports Medicine Institute in 1986.

Born in Southampton, Tunstall Pedoe was the older of identical twin boys, who both went on to read medicine at King’s College, Cambridge. Their father, Daniel Pedoe, was a mathematician whose parents had emigrated from Poland, and their mother, Mary Tunstall, was a geography lecturer. Dan Tunstall Pedoe qualified at St Bartholomew’s Hospital in 1964. He married Robin Shankland in 1968 after returning from a spell working as a junior doctor in India. In 1970 he completed his DPhil on blood velocity at Wolfson College, Oxford, and, after spending a year in the United States, began working in east London, based jointly at Hackney Hospital and Bart’s.

Interviewed recently for a local community history project, Tunstall Pedoe recalled how he had found that many patients in Hackney with “fairly neglected” medical conditions were reluctant to seek treatment. “Local hospitals had

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a reputation that people died there,” he said, resulting in many patients’ feeling that doctors couldn’t do very much to help them.

He held a joint appointment as consultant cardiologist and general physician with Bart’s Hospital. But the two hospitals had a “different ethos” and “difficult” relationship, particularly over finances after merged management. After complaining of having insufficient funds to run his department—less than £1 per patient for each investigation—he was told to raise the extra money he needed by running studies for private drug firms. “I thought that was scandalous,” he told the Hackney Society.³

Tunstall Pedoe wrote numerous papers on Doppler ultrasound techniques and marathon medicine. He saw his greatest success, however, as helping to deliver—in his role as lead clinician on the commissioning team and subsequently its chairman—the new Homerton University Hospital that local people had been promised for many years.

Hackney Hospital had had a “legacy of poor provision,” although there was some fiery opposition to its replacement. Making the development happen was “a huge achievement” that benefited patients and the local community, says John Anderson, who worked with Tunstall Pedoe initially as a registrar when the new hospital opened in 1987. “Dan had a wonderful phrase,” says Anderson. “He said every hospital he’d ever worked at in the East End had closed—except for the Homerton.”

Anderson says the new hospital was “well designed” by the team and meant that patients were no longer wheeled outside in the cold, across wet courtyards, to reach various departments. He also recalls Tunstall Pedoe’s perfectionist streak and ability to speak up for his patients, targeting “blistering” letters at “whoever was responsible” for any problems they encountered.

During his retirement, Tunstall Pedoe developed advancing Parkinson’s disease and was committed to aiding further research into a cure and treatment. He had many interests, including a passion for photography. He specialised in microphotography of insects. Some of his work is displayed at the Homerton, where he had led the art works committee.

Predeceased by his wife, Robin, in 2014, Dan Tunstall Pedoe leaves his twin brother; a daughter; and two sons.

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References are in the version on thebmj.com.

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Brian Dalton



Former general practitioner Gravesend and Tisbury (b 1928; q St. Thomas' Hospital, London, 1953), d 14 April 2015.

Brian Dalton did his house jobs in Salisbury, where he met Mary Pearson, a paediatric registrar. They married in 1955 and moved to Gravesend in 1957, where he joined a general practice. Mary and Brian had three sons, and in 1979 they decided to move to the country. He took over a singlehanded practice in Tisbury, Wiltshire, with just one part time receptionist; surgery was held in a village hall that had previously been the fire station. By 1985 the practice was larger, allowing his son John to join him. A site was chosen in the village for a new surgery, which Brian helped design and which opened in 1987. Widowed in 2002 Brian acquired a dog, which was his constant companion until his death at home, nursed by his family.

John Dalton

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Heather Margaret Dukes

Former general practitioner and surgeon (b 1942; q Birmingham 1965; FRCS, FRCGP), died from angiosarcoma on 20 September 2014.

Heather Margaret Dukes went to Harare Central Hospital immediately after qualifying, developing skills in vascular access surgery that helped to start central Africa's first renal unit. She did the same in Coventry in 1969 before becoming resident surgical officer at the Children's Hospital, Birmingham. After a career break, Heather retrained in paediatrics and was subsequently appointed as Coventry's principal medical officer (child health) in 1981. Decades of church led voluntary work alerted Heather to the difficulties that people without an address experienced in

registering for medical care. After retraining in general practice, she founded the Anchor Centre, which provided primary healthcare for homeless people and refugees. Heather leaves her husband, David; four children; and five grandchildren.

David C Dukes, Deborah K Dukes, Juliet P Dukes

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Patrick Christopher Molloy



Retired general practitioner (b 1921; q National University of Ireland 1951), died from metastatic prostate cancer on 20 December 2014.

Patrick Christopher Molloy did his house jobs in Bradford—where he met his wife, Joyce—and Warrington before moving to the Calder Valley in 1958 to work as a singlehanded general practitioner. He joined the Hebden Bridge group practice in 1968, where he worked until he retired at the age of 65. In his retirement he worked as a volunteer driver for the Calder Valley club and was a member of the Cosmos and Damian Society, an international society for Catholic doctors. He also helped found the parish conference of the St Vincent de Paul Society, which did great work visiting sick, lonely, and housebound people. He leaves two children.

Anne Margaret Molloy

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James Rowland Russell

Retired general practitioner Sittingbourne (b 1940; q Cambridge/Middlesex Hospital 1965; MA, DOBst RCOG), died in a road traffic accident on 2 March 2015.

James Rowland Russell ("Jim") met his wife, Glenys, a nurse, when he was working as a house surgeon at the Middlesex Hospital. After registration, he undertook a short



service commission in the Royal Navy before entering general practice in Newdigate, Surrey, and joining a friend in practice in Sittingbourne, Kent, in 1980. He took early retirement in 1994 but continued health screening clinics and regular locum clinics in Sittingbourne and Shrewsbury, before finally hanging up his stethoscope on his 70th birthday. About three years before his death, he was diagnosed with cardiac amyloidosis. Jim and Glenys were planning their golden wedding anniversary on the day of the accident that killed him. He leaves Glenys, a son, three daughters, and seven grandchildren.

Rob Russell, Peter Mills

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John Wilkinson



Former physician, public health specialist, and minister of the Church of Scotland, Kenya and Edinburgh (b 1918; q Edinburgh 1941; MD, FRCP Ed, BD, MFCM, DTM & H), d 17 January 2015.

Having found his calling to be a missionary doctor, John Wilkinson ("Jack") served in the Royal Army Medical Corps, in north Africa and Italy in 1942. This gave him experience of trauma surgery, clinical medicine, and medical administration. With his wife, Jean, a teacher, he then spent almost 30 years in Kenya, working as a relief doctor to three church hospitals. In 1975 the couple returned to Edinburgh, and Jack worked with the Lothian Health Board in 1975-88, taking a particular interest in the health needs of homeless people. He wrote and published widely, focusing

on the interface between medicine and theology. Predeceased by Jean in 2008, he leaves three children, two grandchildren, and a great grandchild.

Ewan Wilkinson, Colin Sinclair

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Jesmond Woolf



Former general practitioner (b 1922; q St Bartholomew's Hospital, London, 1949), d 15 November 2014.

Jesmond Woolf served as a medical officer in the Royal Air Force and then worked assisting a GP in Kilburn, London. Woolf and his family moved to his own practice in Cremorne Road, west Chelsea, in 1960. In the 1980s the practice moved into the new World's End Health Centre, where Jesmond was one of the commissioning doctors. On retiring in 1992 he had time for his personal interests, such as classical music. In 2010 he was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. He spent four years in the wing of a residential care home in Wandsworth, where his medical needs and vegetarian diet were excellently served. While there, he pursued new interests, such as gardening. He leaves his wife, Betty, and two sons, Michael and David.

Betty Woolf, Michael Woolf, Neil Browning

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