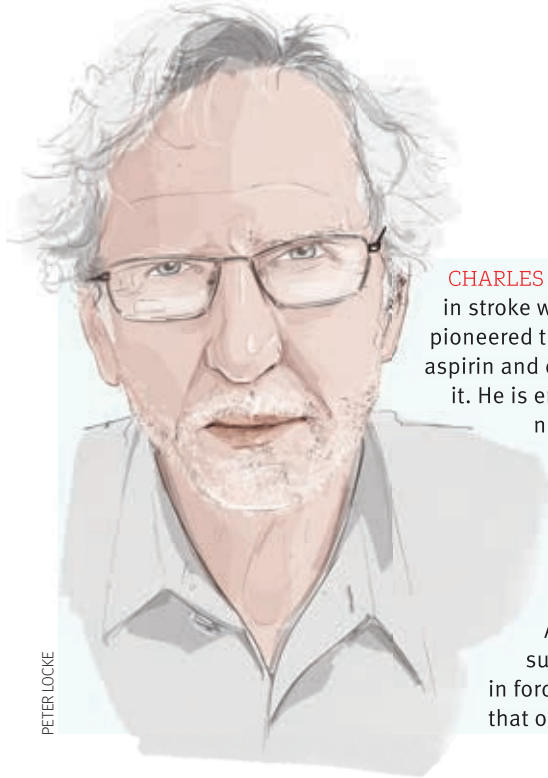


Charles Warlow

Would be pilot, sailor, and artist



PETER LOCKE

CHARLES WARLOW, 71, became interested in stroke when few people were and pioneered trials showing the benefit of aspirin and carotid surgery in preventing it. He is emeritus professor of medical neurology at the University of Edinburgh. Among his many publications is an account of a head injury he experienced in a fall on a sailing boat: as luck would have it, a fellow crew member was also a neurologist. A strong supporter of assisted suicide, Warlow has also weighed in forcefully in attacking companies that offer private screening services.

Bevan or Lansley? Who has been the best and the worst health secretary in your lifetime?

Lansley was and is a catastrophe for the English NHS. Luckily his baleful influence does not extend to Scotland

What was your earliest ambition?

To join the RAF. Luckily, I became short sighted.

Who has been your biggest inspiration?

John Fry (a founder member of the Royal College of GPs), who, when I was a teenager, was my family doctor. He assured me that changing my intended degree from science to medicine would be fine, and he later taught me that GPs were family practitioners who provided continuity of care. He prescribed Mist Gent Alk as a handy placebo, described hospital consultants as his ancillary workers, and did enduring epidemiological research based on obsessive record keeping, which he searched by using hand punched cards and a knitting needle.

What was the worst mistake in your career?

Missing a case of bacterial endocarditis. The second stroke was far worse than the first.

What was your best career move?

Moving from London to Aberdeen to be a lecturer in medicine. I learnt some neurology from Allan Downie, wrote an MD thesis on deep vein thrombosis, and did enough general medicine to be allowed to become a neurology trainee (and I learnt to ski). It was far enough from London that no one there quite knew what I'd been up to when I wanted to return, and it probably stood me in good stead when I later applied for the chair of neurology at Edinburgh.

Who is the person you would most like to thank and why?

My parents, for being so supportive and encouraging, even though I was a horrible teenager. But it's too late.

Bevan or Lansley? Who has been the best and the worst health secretary in your lifetime?

Lansley was and is a catastrophe for the English NHS. Luckily his baleful influence does not extend to Scotland. The best was Nicola Sturgeon, who, in Scotland, resisted the worst of the purchaser-provider split and the commercialisation of healthcare pursued by the so called Labour government in England.

To whom would you most like to apologise?

My parents, for the same reason.

If you were given £1m what would you spend it on?

My five children; they need the money far more than I do.

Where are or were you happiest?

Sailing my boat up the Sound of Mull in the spring.

What single unheralded change has made the most difference in your field in your lifetime?

Computers, both for brain imaging and for epidemiological research.

Do you support doctor assisted suicide?

Of course, if all other avenues have been explored and the patient is fully mentally competent. It will be interesting to see who gets the law changed first—Westminster or Holyrood.

What book should every doctor read?

Need Your Doctor be so Useless? by Andrew Malleon (1973). It foreshadowed evidence based medicine before the name was invented.

What poem, song, or passage of prose would you like mourners at your funeral to hear?

That's already organised: *The Owl and the Pussy Cat*; *Hey Jude*; and Mozart's piano concerto no 21 in C major, the second movement of which was used as the soundtrack for the 1967 Swedish film *Elvira Madigan*.

If you could be invisible for a day what would you do?

Spy on my oldest son teaching his physics class, my oldest daughter doing a GP surgery, my middle son, presently measuring corrosion (aka rust) on the trains between Edinburgh and London, and my two youngest children during their school lessons.

What television programmes do you like?

I hardly watch any, but I'm moderately addicted to *Question Time* and reruns of *Inspector Morse*, *Lewis*, *Frost*, and *Foyle's War*.

What is your most treasured possession?

My boat (a Rustler 36, for those in the know).

What, if anything, are you doing to reduce your carbon footprint?

Avoiding flying: hopefully I'm now down to one return flight a year, to go skiing in the Alps (until I'm too old or the snow melts away, whichever comes first).

What personal ambition do you still have?

To be a much better artist. My teacher is very kind.

Summarise your personality in three words

Impatient; slightly lazy.

Where does alcohol fit into your life?

Evenings.

Do you have any regrets about becoming a doctor?

None at all.

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