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## Victor Miller

Laura Miller



Victor Miller was born in Hackney, London, on 20 September 1935 and died in Hampstead on 2 April 2020.

The younger son of refugees, Victor was born determined. Much of his primary school education took place in air raid shelters, and he was frequently beaten at his secondary school for being Jewish.

Wanting a better life, he asked to transfer to a local grammar school. Despite passing the entrance exams,

the head teacher there had the temerity to suggest Victor didn't have "what it takes": he was likely an undiagnosed dyslexic. Luckily, Victor was undeterred, and, similarly, his father believed that he could do anything he set his mind to; he retook his A levels at the Northern Polytechnic, where he learned to fly, thanks to five excellent teachers.

Victor secured a place at Glasgow University. He entered medical school in 1955. After qualifying, his clinical rotation consisted, inevitably, of long,

gruelling hours under the apprenticeship of stern doctors who held his feet to the fire. He advanced through different units at the Western Infirmary, Stobhill, the Royal Hospital for Sick Children, and Oak Bank Hospital and passed his exam of membership to the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons, Glasgow, in 1965.

In February 1966, en route to marrying Judy, Victor stopped to post an application for the role of registrar at Great Ormond Street. One of the interviewers there asked what he might wish to specialise in. Realising the next question would lead on from his answer, and coming from a department with an interest in gastroenterology, he responded, “gastroenterology.” And so began a process of opening up a specialist area in paediatrics, alongside colleagues in other European countries, Australia, and the US.

After a rotation year in Philadelphia, Victor became senior registrar in paediatrics in Manchester, moving between Booth Hall and other local hospitals—and additionally lecturing at the university. A while later, he took up the NHS’s first ever consultant post in paediatric gastroenterology. At its peak, his unit provided a seven day service covering the whole of Lancashire, part of north Wales, Yorkshire, and part of the Midlands. Under Victor’s supervision, Manchester was one of the first two units in the country to provide long term intravenous support for infants with nutritional failure, and one of three major centres for the management of Crohn’s disease.

Although he was proud of his achievements, including his election to fellowship of both the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons and the Royal College of Physicians, Victor focused on the tenderest aspects of his work. He was aware of the distress of his patients and their families and so vowed to make medical procedures as accessible and tolerable as possible, campaigning for appropriate supplies and resources for his clinics and wards.

Over time, he developed the quiet stoicism of someone who has witnessed too much. When the day finally came for him to retire, he began to study how different religions respond to human suffering and did an MA in comparative religion.

After losing his wife, Judy, to a slow degenerative condition, he talked about the need to attend both to diseases inside patients’ bodies and to their deeper needs as they go on their medicalised journeys. He felt that it was a shame that people didn’t talk more about death and illness; he saw his role as to offer healing even when there could be no cure.

As we entered the pandemic, Victor talked about the possibility of and need for a reset—for a greater societal emphasis on the least measurable of things: our humanity.

He loved being in the mountains, regularly attended concerts and the theatre, and was an avid thinker and reader. More than anything, he put his faith in life, and was full of compassion and love which he shared with his partner, Valerie, and his daughters, Sarah and Laura, and their respective families.

Victor Miller hung up his stethoscope on 2 April 2020.

Consultant paediatrician (gastroenterology) Booth Hall Children’s Hospital and Royal Hospital for Sick Children; honorary lecturer in paediatrics and child health University of Manchester (b 1935; q Glasgow 1961; MRCPs, FRCPS, FRCP), died from covid-19 (multiple organ failure) on 2 April 2020