Christopher John (“Jack”) Dewhurst

Teacher and cofounder of paediatric and adolescent gynaecology

Jack Dewhurst was the first British obstetrician and gynaecologist to develop a particular interest in intersex disorders and congenital abnormalities in children and adolescents. He also wrote the current definitive text for trainee obstetricians and gynaecologists, was professor of obstetrics and gynaecology at Queen Charlotte’s Hospital in 1968 until his retirement in 1986.

As a medical student Jack was university billiard champion until he graduated in 1943. After six months working in a local hospital he joined the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve as a surgeon lieutenant. On D Day in 1944 he was in the fleet of ships which left Portsmouth for the Normandy beaches, landing troops and tanks on Sword Beach and carrying the wounded back to Britain. In 1945 and 1946 he was on the battleship King George V. After the war he returned to Manchester. He worked briefly in paediatrics but soon realised that his interest was more in the mother than the child, training as an obstetrician at St Mary’s Hospital in Manchester between 1948 and 1951. In 1951 he became lecturer at the Jessop Hospital for Women in Sheffield, where he remained until 1967, ascending the academic tree to senior lecturer and then reader. He was professor at Queen Charlotte’s Hospital in 1968 until his retirement in 1986.

Jack published his first book on gynaecological disorders in infants and children in 1963. In 1969 he published with R R Gordon, a paediatrician, Intersex Disorders, which was then the definitive text. As his reputation grew internationally, he stimulated two American gynaecologists, Vincent Capraro and John Huffman, to pursue similar interests, the three of them founding internationally a subspecialty and creating the world council and the first world congresses of paediatric and adolescent gynaecology.

Jack’s first publication was in 1950, and he published 109 peer reviewed publications during his career. He became famous as a teacher and lecturer, being considered by many to be one of the best lecturers in the world. When asked whether lecturing came naturally to him, he admitted that in 1951 he had no idea how to lecture. He spent the next year attending lectures given by men he thought to be great lecturers and made notes on their style and technique. He found a number of common themes, which he translated into his own deliveries and thereafter became an outstanding speaker.

Jack was unselfish and generous, and not only in his personal life. He was a tremendous supporter and inspiration to young obstetricians and gynaecologists. His ability to obtain the best from people is probably epitomised by the fact that his seven senior lecturers all became full professors in their own right—a unique record for any professor of obstetrics and gynaecology in the United Kingdom.

The respect and admiration that Jack generated culminated in his being appointed president of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists in 1975, and in 1977 he was knighted for his services to medicine. Jack’s legacy to obstetrics and gynaecology will undoubtedly be his passion for imparting knowledge. In 1972 he published Integrated Obstetrics and Gynaecology for Postgraduates, which remains the standard text for all trainees in obstetrics and gynaecology. The seventh edition has just been published, still bearing his name.

In the latter part of his career, Jack became fascinated by history and published Royal Confinements, which became a classic. Jack met his wife, Hazel, in 1951 on his first day in Sheffield: he was performing a caesarean section and she was giving the anaesthetic. As he had had such a lonely childhood himself he was completely dedicated to his family and despite travelling extensively never neglected his children. After retirement, he and Hazel decided to learn Italian but in true Dewhurst style: they gained a place at the University of Perugia and were the oldest students by 30 years. Jack became fluent in Italian, and he had a passion for Italian Renaissance painting. He was deeply religious and a devout Roman Catholic. He published Saints and Sickness, and he was able to recount the saints’ days until his final illness. He leaves Hazel, two sons and a daughter; and six grandchildren.

D K Edmonds

Professor Sir Christopher John (“Jack”) Dewhurst, former president of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (b 1920; q Manchester 1943; FRCSed, FRCOG), died from bronchopneumonia and cerebral lymphoma on 1 December 2006.
Ywan Anthony
Former general practitioner east Birmingham (b 1934; q Birmingham 1957; MRCGP, DPH), died from Parkinson’s disease on 16 January 2007.
Ywan Anthony was brought up bilingual in Welsh and English in the west Midlands. After house jobs in Birmingham he studied at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine for the DPH and then took a short term commission in the army for three years, at the same time developing his interest in sailing. He left the army in 1963 and after working as a locum in West Bromwich took up a post as a junior partner in Hall Green, Birmingham. In 1967 he became a partner in Small Heath, Birmingham, remaining there until his retirement in 1994. He particularly enjoyed antenatal clinics and became a well respected trainer, as well as working for the local bus company. He leaves a wife, Claire; two children; and five grandchildren.

Richard Anthony

John Edward Barclay
Former consultant psychiatrist Winwick Hospital, Warrington, and Ormskirk General Hospital, Lancashire (b 1929; q Liverpool 1955), d 5 June 2007.
John Barclay did his national service in 1947 with the Household Cavalry in Germany, from that time showing considerable sporting prowess in fencing, rifle shooting, and skiing. In 1952 he won the fencing event at the Winter Pentathlon in Bad Gastein, Austria. While in the army he was awarded the bronze cross of the Army Rifle Association and broke the British 50 km cross-country skiing record, which he held for seven years, being selected for the British Olympic ski team at the 1956 Winter Olympics. The following year he was house surgeon at St Helen’s Hospital, going on to obstetrics and gynaecology at Ormskirk Hospital, becoming consultant psychiatrist in 1964. He retired in 1988. He leaves a wife, Claire; seven children; and 14 grandchildren.

Emad Salib

Wilma Elizabeth Gemmell
Wilma Gemmell was appointed partner at Barrhead Health Centre in 1993. Diagnosed with breast cancer in 1998, she returned to work in the practice in 1999 after treatment but retired in 2003 after further treatment for recurrence of the tumour. Wilma was committed to raising awareness about breast cancer. She worked with Breast Cancer Care as a support volunteer and enthusiastic ambassador. She sang to large crowds to raise money for cancer charities. She ran the Race for Life many times, once having just completed her chemotherapy. She modelled in Breast Cancer Care’s Scottish fashion show twice. Her attitude to her illness, her courage, and her dedication to helping others was inspirational. She leaves a husband, Gordon, and two children.

Cathrina MacRae, Cathrina McHugh

Michael Gregory Price
Former general practitioner Harpenden, Hertfordshire (b 1926; q St Bartholomew’s Hospital 1952; MRCGP, DRCOG), d 6 January 2007.
Brought up in Jersey, Mike Price escaped from the island in a small boat with four friends during the German occupation in 1944. They were washed up near Cherbourg before escaping to England with the help of a French farmer. Mike initially contemplated a career in surgery before choosing general practice. A founding member of the Royal College of General Practitioners and active in the local medical committee, he practised in Harpenden for over 30 years until his retirement in 1986. A keen golfer, he also loved the sea and in 1982 took a six month sabbatical as ship’s doctor in the Royal Fleet Auxiliary to the Falkland Islands, a few months after the conflict. He leaves a wife, Enid, four children, and 11 grandchildren.

Jim Price

John William (“Jack”) Strain
Former general practitioner Egremont, Cumbria, and medical officer Sellafield (b 1921; q The London Hospital 1953; DF), died from metastatic carcinoma of the prostate on 29 April 2007.
Jack Strain started work in an architect’s office, joining the Royal Air Force in 1939 on the outbreak of war and serving with distinction. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Medal and the Polish Cross of Valour. After the war Jack pursued the career he had hankered after and gained entry to The London as an ex-serviceman. He returned to his native Egremont as a general practitioner until 1980, when he joined British Nuclear Fuels as a medical officer. He retired in 1986 but continued to work as a locum at his original practice. A devout Catholic, he loved rugby and was passionate about fell walking. He leaves a wife, Mary; five sons; and 10 grandchildren.

Greg Strain