

Geoffrey Dean

Epidemiologist who contributed to the understanding of multiple sclerosis

Geoffrey Dean, who has died in Dublin aged 90, was best known as an epidemiologist who in several studies established the importance of an environmental influence on the pathogenesis of multiple sclerosis. This is regarded as his most important scientific contribution. His work is of particular relevance at present because of increasing evidence that the environmental factor in multiple sclerosis is sunlight exposure. Reduced sunlight exposure results in low vitamin D concentrations and increased susceptibility to autoimmune disease.

Dean's interest in multiple sclerosis peaked after he arrived in South Africa in 1947 when he observed the marked variation in prevalence of the disease among the different ethnic groups. The prevalence of multiple sclerosis among English speaking white people born in South Africa was only one quarter and among the Afrikaans speaking white people born in South Africa only one 11th, as frequent as that of the immigrants from northern Europe. Subsequently, with John Kurtzke, he established that immigration before the age of 15 led to a reduced risk for the development of multiple sclerosis in immigrants from northern Europe who settled in South Africa. After that age the immigrants brought with them the high risk of multiple sclerosis that pertains to north Europe. These studies, published in the *BMJ* in 1967 and 1971, showed a strong environmental effect on the development of multiple sclerosis (1967;2:724-30, and 1971;3:725-9). At that time an undetermined infectious agent acting in the mid-teens seemed to be the most likely cause.

Dean was one of the few doctors who, in 1965 during the apartheid years, criticised the South African government for the maltreatment of prisoners. He was arrested and narrowly missed imprisonment under the regime thanks to the intervention of medical friends and colleagues in the United Kingdom, including Richard Doll and the president of the Royal College of Physicians in London, Lord Platt.

Dean moved to Ireland in 1968 to become the first director of the newly formed Medico-Social Research Board. With Marta Elian, he

published several papers on the reverse effects of migration from countries with a low risk of multiple sclerosis to the high risk UK. He established that migrants from the West Indies and India to the UK brought with them a low risk of multiple sclerosis but their offspring born in the UK developed a much higher risk that pertains to the UK. He conducted epidemiological studies with local neurologists in several countries, including Ireland, Spain, and Cyprus. Latterly he was particularly interested in the marked disparity between the low prevalence of multiple sclerosis in Malta and the much higher prevalence in Sicily, two islands only 50 km apart. His last publication, in *Neurology* in 2008, at the age of 89, in conjunction with Maltese neurologists and Alastair Compston's team in Cambridge UK, found that the difference in prevalence was not explained by HLA genes; Geoffrey was keen to pursue further work on this enigma (*Neurology* 2008;70:101-5).

His other main scientific contribution was on porphyria variegata, which he first described in South Africa in the 1950s. He painstakingly established the family tree of people carrying the porphyria gene, going back to the first affected person, Gerrit Renier Van Rooyen, who arrived in South Africa in 1685 during the early Dutch settlement, again published in the *BMJ* (1955;2:89-94). His interest in porphyria led subsequently to much correspondence on the subject of the royal malady and the insanity of King George III, which was, wrongly in Dean's view, attributed to porphyria by Ida MacAlpine and Richard Hunter. He also published widely on the epidemiology of several other disorders.

Between the first publication in 1950, in the *BMJ*, on barium carbonate poisoning and the last in 2008, there were a total of 120 papers and several books, including an autobiography, *The Turnstone*, in 2002.

Born in December 1918 in Wrexham, North Wales, where his father was a local bank manager, Dean was educated at Ampleforth and started his medical studies in 1936, aged 17, at Liverpool University, qualifying in June 1943. He served as a medical officer with Bomber

Command from 1943 to 1945. He married Noni Devlin in June 1944. In postwar England the prospects for advancement as a doctor were daunting, and Dean took a ship to South Africa as the ship's doctor, settling eventually in Port Elizabeth and practising as a consultant physician. After moving back to Dublin in 1968 he was later appointed a Commander of the Order of the British Empire by Queen Elizabeth; University College Dublin conferred on him a doctorate of



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science; and the Royal College of Physicians in Ireland conferred on him its fellowship.

In his last decade he developed prostatic carcinoma and fibrosing alveolitis. He fought against both illnesses with tenacity and was determined to live to contribute further to the understanding of multiple sclerosis and to publish the next paper. He leaves his second wife, Maria, and four children.

Michael Hutchinson

Geoffrey Dean, epidemiologist (b 1918, q 1943 Liverpool), died 7 September 2009 from fibrosing alveolitis.

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Richard James Bayly

Former general practitioner Southampton (b 1923; q Charing Cross Hospital, London, 1951), died from metastatic malignant melanoma on 27 March 2009.

Richard James Bayly ("Dick") captained his university rugby XV. His studies were interrupted by national service, during which he was a technician in the Royal Air Force. After house jobs, he took his first position in general practice in Reading. He settled in Southampton three years later and remained there until his retirement in 1984. In the later years of his career, he became the medical officer to the Southampton docks. He enjoyed travelling throughout Europe, but favoured France and eventually settled for a part of the year in south west France and latterly in Normandy. He leaves Jean, his wife of 52 years; two children; and four grandchildren.

Sally Thomson

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Janina Elizabeth Hopkin



Former associate specialist in medical genetics Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University NHS Trust (b 1950; q Welsh National School of Medicine 1973), d 6 November 2009.

Janina Elizabeth Hopkin qualified with full honours and a distinguished collection of distinctions and academic prizes, then completing a masters degree in human genetics at Edinburgh University. Beyond a rich family life, she developed at Oxford into a highly capable and caring medical geneticist, enjoying an enduring friendship with birth defect specialist Tricia Boyd. Janina was committed to the clinical practice of medical genetics, emphasising clinical skills, critical analysis of data (clinical, pathological, and molecular), and pastoral care. She was key in developing the cancer genetics service at the new university

hospital in Swansea. She leaves a husband, Julian Hopkin; three children; and one grandson.

Julian Hopkin

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Martin Frank Hyatt

Former general practitioner Eltham, London (b 1935; q Royal London Hospital 1959; MFFP), d 20 March 2009. Martin Frank Hyatt did his house jobs at Whipps Cross Hospital before working for the Colonial Medical Service in the Gambia during 1960-1. After two years of locums and vocational training, he became an assistant and then partner in the Eltham practice, where he remained until retirement in 2000. Martin also worked as sessional medical officer for Greenwich Health Cytology and Optimum Health Family Planning. He was secretary and chairman of the Lewisham division of the BMA, as well as president of the West Kent Medico-Chirurgical Society. Passionate about classical music and opera, he was also an excellent wine maker. He leaves Marilyn, his wife of 49 years; two daughters; and seven grandchildren.

V R K Rao

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Gareth Richard Melville-Jones



Consultant histopathologist Withybush General Hospital, Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire, d 2 January 2009. My friend and colleague Gareth Richard Melville-Jones was quirky, unusual, dedicated, and meticulous. All in his professional circle admired his diagnostic skill and professionalism, and none could fail to be influenced both by his humanity and by his simple plain specialness. Fewer people, however, were aware of Gareth the inventor. Oh that he had buckled down and obtained patents for his inventions. For fame

and fortune may have followed from the Gareth patented Microscope Work Station, or even the Indestructible Dog Basket. All his friends will smile as they think of him, and he will be sorely missed. He leaves a wife, Caryl, and three children.

Sally Williams

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John Michael Naish



Former consultant physician and gastroenterologist Frenchay Hospital, Bristol (b 1915; q Cambridge/King's College, London, 1939; FRCP), died from bronchopneumonia on 6 August 2009. After war service in the Royal Navy John Michael Naish came to Bristol, developing the general medical department at Frenchay Hospital and establishing with colleagues one of the first multidisciplinary gastroenterological services nationally. He was councillor and examiner for the Royal College of Physicians. His books ranged from *The Clinical Apprentice* in 1949 to *Understanding Your Bowels* for patients in the 1970s. Believing observation to be the key to diagnosis, he declared that for difficult cases "cat-like observation and masterly inactivity are the order of the day." In retirement he won national acclaim for his magnolia collection, and wrote his memoirs. He leaves six children and 12 grandchildren.

Sonya Naish

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Dennis Snow Ridley

Former consultant pathologist Hospital for Tropical Diseases, London (b 1918; q London 1942; OBE, MD, FRCPath), died from heart disease on 25 April 2009. In 1966, Dennis Snow Ridley, a meticulous microscopist, published with William Jopling, a clinical leprologist, the classification of leprosy according to immunity.



The Ridley-Jopling classification revolutionised understanding of leprosy, becoming the mainstay of leprologists world wide and the basis for clinical trials. Dennis published some 70 influential papers on the histopathology of leprosy. He ran an efficient and friendly diagnostic laboratory, introducing the formol-ether concentration technique for faecal parasites and a range of ELISA tests for diagnosing parasitic infections. He was a quiet, humble man, and a committed Christian. His second wife, Marian, who collaborated with his work on leishmaniasis, died in 2008. There were no children by either marriage.

Anthony Bryceson

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James Lionel Somervell

Former consultant surgeon Jammalamadugu, Andhra Pradesh, India, and Walsall (b 1927; q Cambridge/University College Hospital, London, 1951; FRCS 1960), died from subarachnoid haemorrhage on 20 August 2009. After qualification and posts in England and Vellore, south India, James Lionel Somervell ("Jim") worked for 14 years in the Church of South India's Jammalamadugu Hospital. After registrar posts in Birmingham, he was consultant surgeon in Walsall from 1970 to 1989, working as a general surgeon with a special interest in upper gastrointestinal and breast surgery. Medical representative to the hospital board, he also had a special affinity with people from the Indian subcontinent and a splendid sense of humour. Family and church were central to Jim's life, and he strongly supported the ordination of his wife, Mary. He leaves Mary, three children, and seven grandchildren.

William A M Cutting

Jeffrey M Dolphin

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