

Dr Barry Hoffbrand: distinguished former editor of the *Postgraduate Medical Journal*

Donald RJ Singer 

Former Editor-in-Chief of the *Postgraduate Medical Journal* Dr Barry Ian Hoffbrand died suddenly on April 24, 2020 at the age of 86.

A prominent member of a generation of very bright young doctors at University College Hospital (UCH) in London who went on to distinguished careers, he was much admired for his keen intellect, clinical perception and skills, gentle good humour and kindly nature, combined with a wonderfully sharp intelligence. Professor Dame Jane Dacre remembered him as ‘a kind, witty, clever man, and a great physician’.

He was born in Bradford, West Yorkshire, to Philip Hoffbrand, a bespoke tailor, and Minnie (née Freedman), both from Jewish families from Eastern Europe. After Bradford Grammar School, he went up to read medicine from 1952 to 1956 at The Queen’s College, Oxford, where he was a keen member of the college cricket team—the Quondams. He was pleased to feature in the 1950s on the silver Quondams Cup. Clinical training on a Goldsmid scholarship followed from 1956 to 1958 at UCH Medical School, London, where he was awarded prizes in clinical pathology and haematology. His postgraduate medical training was mainly at UCH, where he was house physician to Max (later Lord) Rosenheim, after an initial 6 months at St Luke’s Hospital, Bradford. He also spent a year as senior research fellow from 1967 to 1968 at the Cardiovascular Research Institute, at the University of California Medical Center in San Francisco. Barry’s research on cardiovascular physiology led to a DM in 1971 from Oxford University.

Barry was appointed in 1970 as a consultant physician at the Whittington Hospital and honorary senior clinical lecturer at UCH Medical School, with interests in general and renal medicine and hypertension, and went on to develop a very effective nephrology department. After his retirement in 1999, he remained

a strong advocate and campaigner for the Whittington, for its patients as their acute hospital and as an important training centre for medical students and junior doctors. From 2009 to 2015, he was founding chairman of the Whittington Hospital Organ Donation Committee.

Throughout his clinical career, Barry combined his interests in teaching and clinical science. Over 130 of his publications are listed on PubMed, his first paper a case report in 1963 in the *British Medical Journal* on ‘BCG and sarcoidosis’,¹ his last clinical science paper co-authored in 1999 in *Nature Genetics* on a new gene for a deafness and renal tubular acidosis syndrome.²

Barry left an important legacy. He was an inspirational educator and a fine role model for his medical students (remembered by them as a ‘kind and gentle teacher’) and his clinical trainees, highly regarded for his clinical curiosity and acumen, lateral thinking, common sense and sound judgement. A typical impression: “I have such fond memories of my year working as his registrar—he taught me so many of the key skills you need to work as a consultant physician—including listening to your patients and looking after your team”. His house officers were proud that he was the first consultant to support junior doctors when they were in the spotlight for complaining to the press about their long working hours.

In addition to Barry’s clinical interests, he devoted great energy to postgraduate medical education, becoming director of the Whittington’s Academic Centre for Postgraduate Medicine from 1975 to 1981 and its chairman from 1985 to 1987. With Peter Davies, Eric Beck and David Patterson, Barry helped establish and run the prestigious Whittington Hospital MRCP course, complemented by teaching sessions he ran on evenings and weekends with support from his clinical staff. His colleague Professor John Yudkin noted that Barry’s “commitment to the Whittington and in particular to its reputation in education was clear for everyone to see. The Academic Centre was his real passion”. A former registrar, Dr Tony Delamothe, said: “I never

encountered anybody during my clinical medicine days who so embodied education”. Barry also contributed to teaching and training through Boards of University College London and the University of London, as an examiner and councillor for the Royal College of Physicians and as chairman of the North East Thames Higher Medical Training Committee.

He had a long association with the Fellowship of Postgraduate Medicine (FPM), a member of its Council from 1978 and its honorary treasurer from 1999 to 2000. The FPM founded the *Postgraduate Medical Journal (PMJ)* in 1925 and the *PMJ* remains one of the FPM’s two official journals. Barry’s association with the *PMJ* spanned over 20 years, first as assistant editor from 1972 to 1978 and then as its editor-in-chief from 1980 to 1993. In spite of being a very busy physician at the Whittington Hospital, he was meticulous in his work as editor. He is remembered by his FPM colleagues and his Editorial Manager Mrs Jean Coops as always polite and charming to those who worked in the Fellowship and its Journal office. In his role as editor-in-chief, he built on the efforts of his predecessors, modernising the journal, commissioning authoritative reviews and editorials from a wide range of national and international expert clinicians and developing the *PMJ* into a “clinical educational journal to rival the best”.³ He was guest of honour at the *PMJ*’s 90th anniversary conference in October 2015 and was an active delegate at the age of 85 as guest at the FPM’s Osler Centenary Conference



Image courtesy of Philip Graham, Emeritus Professor of Child Psychiatry

Fellowship of Postgraduate Medicine, London, UK

Correspondence to Donald Singer, President, Fellowship of Postgraduate Medicine, London W1G 9EB, UK; fpm.chandos@gmail.com

in December 2019, engaging keenly with junior and senior presenters at the event.

Barry's wide interest in culture, strong intelligence and an easy ability to communicate informed his congenial and open-friendly manner. He was a greatly respected member of many medical societies, including the Society of Apothecaries (he was editor of *The Apocethary*), the Harveian Society of which he was president and he was vice-president of the Royal Society of Medicine. He was also president of the London Jewish Medical Society and chairman of the Medical Committee of the Italian Hospital in Queen Square. He was a member of the Highgate Literary and Scientific Institute and when president of Probus he created an enviable lecture programme, while well able to replace an indisposed speaker at very short notice.

He continued his passion for cricket as a member of the Marylebone Cricket Club, kept an interest in Bradford Northern Rugby Football Club (later Bradford Bulls) and was an enthusiast for music and art. A frequent visitor to performances of chamber music and opera, he would often attend the Wigmore Hall and enjoyed dress rehearsals at the English National Opera, where he would sometimes meet his daughter Rachel who trained and worked there. Barry was also a friend of Hampstead Garden Opera, "full of ideas"

and a strong supporter of its company. In later life, Barry returned to painting, an interest from his schooldays. He studied at the Hampstead School of Art and created many much admired paintings and drawings. He combined a new interest in art history with another great interest, the history of medicine, embarking on a series of lectures and publishing articles on themes ranging from the engravings of Hogarth to doctors featuring in 17th-century and 18th-century artworks, and the fate of refugee Huguenot physicians. His most recent publication was in early April this year in the *Journal of Medical Biography* on 'Joseph Wright of Derby and Dr Erasmus Darwin, the artist and his physician'.⁴

Barry's vitality and engagement in art, medicine, history, Judaism, politics and so many aspects of life was infectious and endearing. He was a keen correspondent both in the medical and in the public press on matters about which he felt strongly. Barry will live on through the patients he treated, the doctors he taught, his publications, his art, his family and everyone who knew and loved him. In 1961, Barry married Marina Morduch, a fellow student at UCH, London, who became a psychiatrist. He is survived by Marina, their three children, Sara, Julia and Rachel, seven grandchildren and his younger brother Victor Hoffbrand, Emeritus Professor of Haematology at University College, London.

Twitter Donald Singer @HealthMed.

Funding The author has not declared a specific grant for this research from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

Competing interests None declared.

Patient consent for publication Not required.

Provenance and peer review Not commissioned; internally peer reviewed.

© Author(s) (or their employer(s)) 2020. No commercial re-use. See rights and permissions. Published by BMJ.



To cite Singer DR. *Postgrad Med J* Epub ahead of print: [please include Day Month Year]. doi:10.1136/postgradmedj-2020-138876

Received 15 August 2020

Accepted 16 August 2020

Postgrad Med J 2020;0:1–2.
doi:10.1136/postgradmedj-2020-138876

ORCID iD

Donald RJ Singer <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8870-3584>

REFERENCES

- Hoffbrand BI. B.C.G. and sarcoidosis. *Br Med J* 1963;1:658–9.
- Karet FE, Finberg KE, Nelson RD, et al. Mutations in the gene encoding B1 subunit of H⁺ - ATPase cause renal tubular acidosis with sensorineural deafness. *Nat Genet* 1999;21:84–90.
- Graham P. Barry Ian Hoffbrand: national leader in post-graduate medical education. *BMJ* 2020;369:m2581.
- Hoffbrand BI. Joseph Wright of Derby and Dr Erasmus Darwin, the artist and his physician. *J Med Biogr* 2020 (Apr 06: Online ahead of print).