

Brian Prichard

Championed the use of β blockers in hypertension

In 1964 Brian Prichard published two seminal papers in the *BMJ* that showed for the first time that β blockers lower blood pressure. In the first, a double blind trial of patients with angina, he noticed that pronethalol produced a small fall in blood pressure (*BMJ* 1964;1:1227-8). This drug was withdrawn in 1963 because it produced tumours in mice. In the second he produced the same effect with propranolol (*BMJ* 1964;2:725-7).

At first the medical profession was sceptical, not least because β blockers inhibit cardiac contraction, viewed as an undesirable effect and also reduced cardiac output. Also, the fall in blood pressure was not seen in animals, and the mechanism of action was unclear. Prichard spent the remainder of the 1960s championing the cause, and persuading the drug company ICI to increase the dose of propranolol tablets from 10 mg to 250 mg to allow sufficient dosing of hypertensive patients. Before this patients had to take as many as 40 tablets a day.

Initially it was not fully appreciated that clinicians needed to take time to search for the optimal dose for individual patients to achieve the best possible therapeutic results. Use of β blockers in hypertension heralded a new era in pharmacology. Before their development patients took drugs only if they were not feeling well, but afterwards patients without symptoms starting taking drugs to prevent the effects of hypertension, shifting the emphasis from treatment to prevention.

"It's Brian's enduring legacy that in the past 50 years, millions of patients have been treated with β blockers to control blood pressure and so prevent heart attacks and strokes," said Raymond MacAllister, a colleague from the department of clinical pharmacology at University College, London.

Fish oils

But Prichard's biggest hobby horse was undoubtedly fish oils. A keen advocate of the omega three diet, he ate pilchards twice a day, and packed vast quantities when he went on his travels. "He was so fastidious that he'd wash them to get rid of the tomato sauce, then replace it with low salt sauce," remembered MacAllister. "On one occasion he nicked himself shaving and attributed the fact he bled for hours to the beneficial effects of fish oil on his platelet function."

Medicine was only one aspect of the rich tapestry of Prichard's life. He was a local Tory politician (elected Mayor of Wandsworth in 2009), a life long abstainer (the founding chairman of the Institute of Alcohol Studies), an advocate of healthy eating, a committed Christian (serving as a deacon at Trinity Road Chapel, Wandsworth), and a supporter of the Boys' Brigade (where he was medical director and organised many camps).

"My father's life view came out of the Christian Democratic Labour party ethics of the 1920s and '30s. Christianity, medicine, and politics were completely entwined in his life. At his core was the idea that you should serve other people," said his oldest son Andrew, an ear, nose, and throat surgeon, adding his father's many interests were helped by prodigious energy and a supportive wife.

"He was a complete workaholic. The feeling you always had to be doing something productive was ingrained from childhood as was his loyalty to the causes he espoused," said his friend Derek Rutherford, chairman of the Institute of Alcohol Studies.

Brian Prichard was born in Wandsworth, southwest London, in 1932, the second child of Sir Norman Prichard, who later became Labour chairman of London County Council in 1956, and Winifred Prichard, one time president of the National British Women's Abstinence Society. His was a heavily political family.

Skull and crossbones

Qualifying in medicine in 1957 from St George's Hospital, London, Prichard held junior posts at St George's before being appointed in 1962 as a lecturer in clinical pharmacology at University College Hospital Medical School. He became professor in 1980.

There Prichard undertook research, did general medical takes, ran hypertensive and lipid clinics, and had an additional interest in organising the

alcohol detoxification unit. Legend has it that he undertook ward rounds brandishing a hip flask with a skull and crossbones attached. Altogether Prichard published more than 200 papers, and

wrote the text book *Beta Blockers in Clinical Practice* with John Cruickshank.

Prichard served as a councillor for more than 40 years on Wandsworth Council, standing first for Labour and then, after a dispute with the local party, crossing over to the Conservatives. He championed the disadvantaged, taking a particular interest in education and social services. One of the main difficulties he faced becoming mayor in May 2009 was the tradition of serving alcohol at functions. Prichard got round this potential embarrassment by erecting a large notice next to the trays of drinks that said "This

fluid is dangerous to your health. Handle carefully if at all." As chairman of the Conservative Medical Society, he had advised the Thatcher government on health. He was awarded Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 1996 for his service to politics.

Healthy eating, stemming from his work on reducing cardiovascular risk, was a life long obsession. "It would take him two hours to do any food shop since he'd read all the labels," recalls his grandson Tom, now a medical student, adding that his grandmother managed to nip round the shop in under 20 minutes.

"An example of the overlap between different aspects of his life was the fact that at Boys' Brigade camps dad would stand in the canteen making sure that the butter on the children's bread was so modest that it was barely visible," said his younger son, the Reverend Ian Prichard.

He leaves his wife Denise, whom he married in 1956, and four children.

Janet Fricker

Brian Prichard, clinical pharmacologist (b 1932; q 1957, St George's, London), died 6 April 2010 from complications of myeloma.



Patients without symptoms starting taking drugs to prevent the effects of hypertension, shifting the emphasis from treatment to prevention

Ratan Lal Agrawal



Former general practitioner, Basildon, Essex (b 1936; q Jaipur, India 1958), died suddenly from a myocardial infarction on 25 July 2010.

Ratan Lal Agrawal was the youngest student ever to qualify from Jaipur Medical School and the first to qualify as a doctor within a 20 mile radius of his small village in India. He came to the UK in the early 1960s and started general practice in 1966. Ratan built up a successful practice and founded the Southview Park Surgery, where he was a much loved general practitioner, appreciated by patients and staff, until he retired at age 73. In his memory, a scholarship trust has been set up to fund a medical student from the Haryana region. He leaves a wife, Lidia; three children; and one granddaughter.

Rita Kobrak

Vincent Worley

George Worley

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Charlie Granger



Consultant in anaesthetics and intensive care Royal Lancaster Infirmary (b 1959; q St Thomas' Hospital, London, 1983, FRCA), died from glioblastoma on 24 November 2009.

Charlie Granger took a circuitous route to his post in Lancaster, having travelled widely; he spent two years in intensive care medicine in Vancouver. He was one of the first anaesthetists to qualify as an intensivist in the UK. Charlie

brought his own brand of intellectual rigour and a love of teaching to the job, challenging his trainees to justify every decision they made. Combining this with playfulness and iconoclasm, his late night ward rounds become legendary. As clinical director he straddled the gap between management and clinicians and was a tenacious advocate for the welfare of patients. He leaves a wife, Gill, and four daughters.

Gill Granger

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Graham Edward Schofield



Former consultant surgeon Victoria Infirmary, Glasgow (b 1923; q University College Hospital, London, 1945; FRCS), d 13 February 2010. Graham Edward Schofield served in the RAF Medical Service for three years and saw active service in Palestine and Egypt. While a senior registrar at the Victoria Infirmary in Glasgow, he was seconded to St Mary's Paddington to study peripheral vascular surgery for three months, and on his return he set up a vascular surgery unit. He was appointed consultant surgeon in general surgery at the extension of Makerere Medical School in Nairobi for three months. When off duty he spent some time with the flying doctor service helping marginally to reduce the missionary doctors' waiting lists. He leaves a wife, Anne; two daughters; and five grandchildren.

Anne D Schofield

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Rolf Carter Shepherd

Former consultant and vascular surgeon Poole Hospital (b 1926; q St Thomas' Hospital, London, 1950; M Chir, FRCS), d 22 July 2010. Rolf Carter Shepherd did his national service as a surgeon in Singapore



and Malaya. From 1957 to 1962, he was lecturer in the Surgical Professorial Unit at St Thomas', spending a year in the US at Harvard as a fellow in vascular surgery in 1958. He became consultant surgeon in Bournemouth and East Dorset District in 1962. As well as his heavy local surgical workload he provided specialist vascular surgery as far afield as the Channel Islands. He carried out both commitments with characteristic energy, skill, and dedication. He leaves a wife, Joy, and three sons.

Bill Hindle

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Mya Thuang

Former associate specialist in anaesthetics and intensive care, Inverclyde Royal Hospital (b 1930; q Rangoon 1956, DA), died on 29 August 2010 from ischaemic heart disease. After graduating from the University of Rangoon (Yangon), Burma (Myanmar) in 1956, Mya Thuang moved to the UK in 1961 for postgraduate training in anaesthesia. In 1965 he moved to Scotland, where he settled permanently. He worked in anaesthetics in a variety of hospitals in the Greenock area, and spent most of his later career at Inverclyde Royal Hospital, Greenock. After retirement in 1995, he had plenty of opportunity to practise his favourite hobby of photography and to travel. He leaves his wife, May, and a daughter.

Khin May Sein

Caroline Thuang

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John K Wagstaff

Former general physician Brighton and Hove Hospitals (b 1918; q London Hospital 1942), died on 24 June 2010 from cerebral haemorrhage.

To those who did not know him, John K Wagstaff was a quiet man, but the measured exterior hid a dry sense of humour and a man of immense courage and integrity. Parachuted into France early on D Day, he seldom spoke of his experiences, which were discovered by his family only in 1986.



Always an innovator, he developed endoscopy in Brighton (we remember the champagne celebration after the first successful endoscopic retrograde cholangiopancreatography), taught medicine in Iraq, and led his family on mountain and sailing holidays. An enthusiastic teacher, he was awarded the Wyeth travel fellowship in 1982. He leaves a wife, Elizabeth; four daughters; and eight granddaughters.

Margaret Jackson

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2010;341:c5585

Alan Edward Wood

Former general practitioner, Kent, and DHSS senior medical officer (b 1928; q London 1953; FRCGP), d 3 August 2010.

Alan Edward ("Tony") Wood escaped three times from bombed out homes and attended over 100 blitz incidents before being accepted to do medicine. As well as his work as a general practitioner, he was an active member of the Royal College of General Practitioners. He was a founder member of the Kent Postgraduate Centre and chairman of the Medway Postgraduate Centre. In 1977 he became regional medical officer for the Department of Health and Social Security (DHSS) and was later promoted to senior medical officer responsible for primary care policy and general practitioner discipline. Predeceased by his first wife, he leaves his second wife, Phyllis; two sons; a daughter, and a stepson.

Neville Taylor

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