Sean Spence

Advanced the study of deception and free will

Sean Spence was the first person to use brain imaging techniques (functional magnetic resonance imaging) to identify the brain activity that provides a signature for deception and lying, thereby founding a new science and making the first major advance after the lie detector (*Neuroreport* 2001;12:2849-53). Physiologically, telling the truth is a simpler quicker, and more immediate brain response; deception involves suppressing the truth, monitoring the recipient, and creating a lie. Spence found that lying activated the ventrolateral prefrontal cortex, which is the part of the brain specifically activated in the generative activity of volition, but that left dorsolateral prefrontal hypofunction was common to all patients with hysteria when they moved an affected limb (*Lancet* 2000;355:1243-4).

His account ranges over the anarchic limb of Dr Strangelove, the sense of "alien control" in schizophrenia, and the creative act in the generation of art and music

Miscarriage of justice

Spence was the first person to apply neuroimaging techniques to real cases when volunteers lied or withheld the truth in relation to embarrassing personal events. He applied it to show a possible miscarriage of justice in a woman who volunteered for testing after serving a prison sentence for poisoning her child (*European Psychiatry* 2008;23:309-14). Spence studied hysterical paralysis and found that the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex is hypoactive when these patients unsuccessfully try to move, in contrast to normal subjects who feign paralysis and have hyperactivity in the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex (*Lancet* 2000;355:1243-4).

Spence was a clinical academic of the highest order, admired and respected by his patients and clinical coworkers, and appreciated by his students and scientific colleagues from many disciplines. His research findings in the neurobiology of deception and his contribution to the understanding of volition and its philosophical implications for the concept of free will have excited neuroscientists and philosophers, as well as national and international agencies of law enforcement and defence. His work on deception led him becoming a founder member of the European Consortium for the Study of Deception.

His last great work was *The Actor's Brain: Exploring the Cognitive Neuroscience of Free Will*, which is a study of the anatomy, neurophysiology, psychology, and social constraints on unimpeded human action and its implication for the concept of free will. His starting point was Benjamin Libet's observation that there is an electronic signature of brain activity that occurs not only before an action but also before the individual thinks he has initiated the action—thus the brain is making the decision before we think we have done so. Here Spence considers the profound question this raises for the concept of free will, intention, and deception. He beautifully describes what is known about the mechanisms of human action during many important aspects of human activity and disorder to explore the underpinnings of apparent free will. His account ranges over the anarchic limb of Dr Strangelove, the sense of "alien control" in schizophrenia, the mentality of the psychopath and those who deliberately harm others, and the creative act in the generation of art and music. He examines human volition, how it is made up, and how it works—and questions whether it exists at all, whether free will exists.

Spence was born in Barnet, Hertfordshire, on 8 June 1962, raised in South London, and qualified at Guy's Medical School in 1986. He first became a member of the Royal College of General Practitioners and then a Charing Cross trainee in psychiatry, member of the Royal College of Psychiatrists in 1993, and a Medical Research Council clinical training fellow on the cyclotron unit at the Hammersmith Hospital while honorary lecturer at Charing Cross and Imperial College. In 1999 he went to Cornell University, New York. After a locum consultancy at Chelsea and Westminster Hospital he took up an academic post at the University of Sheffield and was promoted to professor in 2005, and fellow of the Royal College of Psychiatrists in 2006. He won many prizes, including the Royal College of Psychiatry research prize and medal, and obtained 21 scientific grants, including a Medical Research Council career establishment grant, 2003-9.

Jazz lover

His scientific publications were numerous, but many readers of the *BMJ* will remember him for his book and film reviews, often reflecting on the interfaces between culture and neuroscience. Spence was a polymath—a writer, poet, musician, philosopher, and innovative trailblazer in cognitive neuroscience. He loved jazz. A friend and former fellow trainee, Martin Stefan, now a consultant in Cambridge, caught something of his essence: "He was very very funny; he had a knack of adding tremendous energy and sparkle to conversation, which would fly at an enormous rate and leave you with the illusion that you'd been an equal contributor to a display of verbal fireworks. He was enormously caring of his patients and his friends (for beneath his acute dissection of his colleagues' foibles was tremendous kindness and warmth)." When his mother became ill he brought her to live in his home in Sheffield, and making arrangements for her future care became his greatest concern after he became unwell.

After fighting metastatic gastric cancer for nearly two years, Spence, a religious man, gave himself to his god, and we lost one of our most creative and talented thinkers in British psychiatry. He leaves his sister and mother.

Steven R Hirsch

Sean Spence, psychiatrist (b 1962; q 1986 Guy's, London), died on 25 December 2010 from gastric cancer

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Solomon Adler

Former general practitioner (b 1923; q Guys Hospital, London, 1948), d 20 December 2010.

Solomon Adler was born in Leipzig, Germany, but because of the rise of Nazism he came to the UK with an older brother in 1937. After qualifying, he became a general practitioner and as his reputation grew he attracted many patients, from home and abroad. He used the latest treatments, often before they were in general use, and his practice contained the latest sophisticated medical equipment. His care and devotion knew no limits—he worked non-stop, such was his dedication to his patients. Although he retired from the NHS in 1993, he continued to see private patients and was in much demand until a few weeks before his death. He leaves a wife, Ellen, and three sons.

Leo Guttentag

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David Prydderch Davies

Former general practitioner Skewen, West Glamorgan (b 1925; q Welsh National School of Medicine, 1948), d 21 October 2010.

David Prydderch Davies joined the Royal Army Medical Corps as a captain after qualification. He then became general practitioner in Skewen, West Glamorgan, where he practised for 38 years. He was a devoted family man with countless interests and hobbies. He is survived by his wife, Connie; three children, and four grandchildren.

Jonathan Prydderch Davies

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2011;342:d1713

John Fyfe

Former general practitioner in Perth (b 1931; q Glasgow 1958; DObst RCOG), died from prostate cancer on 9 October 2010.

John Fyfe worked as a general practitioner for 32 years in Perth, initially as an assistant to the lord provost, Bob Ritchie. This later expanded into a partnership of five doctors and he became senior partner. John was also on the rota for police surgeon, held a qualification in forensics, and was closely involved in the development of doping and drug advice. A keen and talented sportsman, he was highly regarded within the Royal Caledonian Curling Club, serving on a range of influential national committees. He leaves a wife, Isobel; three children; and eight grandchildren.

Neil Marshall

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2011;342:d1707

Ronald Parfitt

Former consultant radiotherapist Lambeth Hospital, London (b 1913; q Guy's Hospital 1939), d 4 January 2011.

Ronald ("Ron") Parfitt followed in the family tradition of studying dentistry at Guy's Hospital but stayed on to qualify as a doctor. After having served during the second world war in the Royal Army Medical Corps, in Europe and North Africa, he joined Lambeth Hospital's radiotherapy department. At Guy's, Ron took up fencing and went on to become national épée champion in 1948 and 1950. He also represented the UK in the 1948 London Olympics and 1952 Helsinki Olympics and invented the first English electric fencing box, which was produced commercially for many years. Predeceased by his wife, Margaret, in 2008, he leaves two daughters and five grandchildren.

Susan Gromett

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2011;342:d1722

Albert Rinsler

Former general practitioner North London (b 1923; q Kings College Hospital, London, 1947), died from cholangiocarcinoma on 25 November 2010.

As a medical student, Albert Rinsler treated wounded soldiers evacuated from Normandy. On qualifying, he spent a year working for Norman Barrett before joining the MRC Pneumoconiosis Unit. On his return to London he entered general practice. He researched and lectured on Luke Fildes's painting, *The Doctor*. After retiring, he co-produced a short film, *Two Pioneers of Surgery*, on Cecil Joll and Josep Trueta. He wrote An *Illustrated History of the Royal Northern Hospital* and as its official archivist produced exhibitions for the Whittington Hospital. Predeceased by his wife, Angela, in 2009, he leaves two sons and three grandchildren.

Sam Rinsler, Dan Rinsler

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Hosie Byram Tavadia

Former consultant pathologist Forth Valley Health Board (b 1937; q Aberdeen 1964; FRCPath, DRCOG), died 3 April 2010 from lung cancer.

Hosie Byram Tavadia was born in China, where he spent his early years with his mother and sister, his father having been captured by the Japanese. After escaping to Hong Kong he moved to the UK to complete his education. He trained in pathology in Glasgow and then as consultant to Forth Valley Health Board established a vibrant pathology department, embracing innovations with enthusiasm. He was much in demand for his forensic expertise and led the investigative team after the Dunblane shootings. A fluent Cantonese speaker, he was a gifted painter and had a passion for salmon fishing. He leaves a wife, Daisy; four children; and seven grandchildren.

Douglas Stewart

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2011;342:d1721

Reginald Lavis Walker

Former private practitioner Sydney, Australia (b 1922; q University of Sydney, 1945; FRCP Ed), d 31 October 2010.

Reginald Lavis Walker was in private practice in Sydney but also worked at Sydney Hospital and taught clinical medicine at the University of New South Wales. His main clinical interest was diabetes and he was a founder member of the Australian Diabetes Society and a member of the Endocrine Society of Australia. He was a committed Christian and was consultant and acting professor of medicine to the Christian Medical College in Vellore, India, for a year. The other great interest in his life was music—he was an accomplished pianist, organist, and carillonist. He is survived by his wife, Beth; five children; and 15 grandchildren.

D H A Boyd

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