

Dame Rosalind Hurley

Dame Rosalind Hurley (Gortvai), DBE, LLB, MD, FRCPath, died on 30 June 2004. She was Professor Emeritus of Medical Microbiology at the Institute of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Imperial College School of Medicine, London, Honorary Consultant Microbiologist, Queen Charlotte's Maternity Hospital and, throughout the 1980s, a member of the Board of the Public Health Laboratory Service (PHLS). She will be particularly remembered by former PHLS colleagues as the first and longest serving chair of the Service's Ethics Committee. She was both a professor and consultant medical microbiologist, and a barrister, and she applied her legal training and expertise for the benefit of her medical, and especially her microbiological, practice.

Though Roz Hurley was born in England, on 30 December 1929, her early education was at the Academy of the Assumption, Wellesly Hills, Massachusetts, USA. She and her brother had been sent to the States during the Second World War to live with a friend of her father. She returned to Britain in 1948 and studied medicine at Charing Cross Hospital Medical School while at the same time studying law. In four years she qualified in medicine (LRCP, MRCS and MBBS in 1955) and became a Barrister at Law. She took the Diploma in Literature of the University of London in 1956 and won the Gilchrist Prize and the Churton Collins Prize in Literature while a pre-registration house officer at the Wembley and West London hospitals. She was called to the Bar at the Inner Temple in 1958 and was awarded LLB in 1959 while a lecturer and assistant clinical pathologist at Charing Cross Hospital and Medical School. Her MD thesis on perinatal candida infection led to a sustained interest in mycology that with the severe fungal

infections seen in immunosuppressed patients became increasingly important in later years.

She was appointed consultant microbiologist at Queen Charlotte's where she provided an excellent clinical microbiology service to mothers and babies and developed a vigorous research programme with her clinical colleagues in obstetrics and gynaecology.

Her contribution soon spread well beyond Queen Charlotte's, for example when she became a member of the PHLS Board. It was at a time when the Service's infectious diseases surveillance role was becoming more prominent and its recently created Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre was growing alongside its established specialist medical microbiology laboratories. During this time there were two major outbreaks of hospital infection that changed the face of public health communicable disease practice – legionnaires' disease at Stafford and a salmonella outbreak at Stanley Royd Hospital, Wakefield.

Both were the subject of official enquiries and Professor Hurley was a member of the enquiry team that examined the events surrounding the Stanley Royd outbreak. Her expertise in medicine, microbiology and law contributed to the clarity and detail of the Report and set standards for the next 20 years.

Another of her major contributions as a Board member was to create the Service's Ethics Committee. During the 1980s it became apparent that medical research needed a more formal ethical framework and local research ethics committees were being established throughout the National Health Service. The PHLS not only needed to have ethical review of its own research projects, but also to be advised on the ethics of its broader programmes of disease surveillance and vaccine evaluation. Professor Hurley established a committee that reported to the Board but operated independently of it. Its membership was drawn wholly from outside the Service except for one Board member whose function was to provide a formal link back to the Board. After she had completed two terms as a Board member, Roz Hurley continued as the Ethics Committee chair until the mid-1990s and the medical and scientific staff of the Service, as well as the Board, reaped the benefit of her understanding and advice. In the same field,



Dame Rosalind Hurley, HRH Prince Philip and Brian Duerden at the Silver Jubilee of the Royal College of Pathologists

she was also chair of the Nuffield Council on Bioethics' Working Group in Human Tissues.

Professor Hurley was active in the Royal College of Pathologists for 20 years. She was a member of Council, Assistant Registrar and Vice-President (1984-87). She chaired the College Working Party on the Retention and Storage of Pathological Records and Archives, and wrote the first two editions of the College's guidance. She also chaired the Joint Working Party of the College and the Institute of Biomedical Science that produced a consensus statement on the use of human tissue in research, education and quality control which later provided a basis for the College's

input into the drafting of the current Human Tissue Bill. She was awarded the College medal in 1999.

At the same time, she chaired the Medicines Commission and served on the management board of the European Medicines Evaluation Agency. Many medical societies also benefited from her energy and ability to get things done. She was President of the Section of Pathology of the Royal Society of Medicine (awarded the C. ver Heyden de Lancey prize in 1991), President of the Association of Clinical Pathologists, Chairman of the Association of Professors of Medical Microbiology and she received honorary fellowships from the Royal College of Obstetricians and

Gynaecologists and the Faculty of Pharmaceutical Medicine. In 1988 she was created DBE.

Nevertheless, there was more to Roz Hurley's life than medicine. In 1964 she married the neurosurgeon Peter Gortvai (who sadly predeceased her) and despite their two demanding and successful professional lives, she found time to pursue interests as diverse and distant from medicine as ancient classical and English literature, archaeology, modern art, gardening, medieval music and Hungarian cooking! Roz was truly a polymath.

Brian I Duerden

Director of the Public Health Laboratory Service, Colindale, 2002-03.

Recollections of M Patricia Jevons FRCPATH 1921 - 2005

Jev had a genius for friendship and it is for that rather than for special distinction as a bacteriologist that she will mainly be remembered. Nevertheless her career as a laboratory researcher and hospital microbiologist deserves to be noticed.

I recall the time I spent as a trainee with Jev with particular gratitude. She had moved from a post at the Central Public Health Laboratory ('Colindale') in the early 1960's to run the laboratory at St Stephen's Hospital, Fulham Road (now the Chelsea and Westminster Hospital). There she ran a 'tight ship' that was also a happy department, providing a service to the local hospitals and general practices. The benchwork done there was rigorous and the support given to clinical colleagues and care for patients exemplary. Jev and her 'right hand', Jenny Midgley, also painstakingly taught those of us in training the basics of microbiology. Each day Jev, always elegant, sprightly and cheerful, descended on the lab from her flat in Hampstead by the first bus. A close link reputedly grew up between her and the bus crew, and one can imagine the matitudinal badinage exchanged between them and their regular and forthright early passenger.

Jev had previously spent a decade in the Cross-Infection Reference Laboratory at Colindale working with two bacteriologists outstanding in that field, Robert Williams and Tom Parker, both of whom she held in high regard. Before that she had been taught bacteriology at the Royal Free Hospital Medical School by Professor R.A. Webb. Webb, joint discoverer of *Listeria monocytogenes*, had an MD from Johns Hopkins University where he had sat at the feet of 'Popsy' Welch, the doyen of the first generation of American bacteriologists. This connection represented an apostolic succession stretching back to the late nineteenth century origins of bacteriology.

It was while at Colindale that Jev published the paper that won her a modest professional immortality. It described for the first time methicillin resistance in *Staph. aureus*¹. Since then hundreds of papers have been written about MRSA and the post-surgical havoc it has wrought. How Jev would have chuckled at the presumption of political leaders proclaiming in recent party exchanges their special ability to overcome 'her' organism!

When Jev retired early from St Stephen's and went with her com-

panion, Liz Asheshov, to live in Majorca her interest in microbiology lapsed, though not that in her microbiological friends. Unfortunately, though, her retreat to the Mediterranean, which should have ushered in a long and happy retirement, was clouded by Liz's early and progressive dementia. Jev was eventually forced back to England, where close contacts with old friends were renewed.

Latterly, Jev was disabled by emphysema so that she could scarcely sustain a conversation; but her cheerfulness and interest in those with whom she had worked and their families was undimmed. On visits to her one was reminded of her sharp wit, her sympathy for all and her sheer style. These qualities of Jev's prime, rather than MRSA, are what she should be remembered for. She would, even so, have enjoyed the irony that when personal memories fade the opposite is bound to become true and Jev's name will continue to be cited in yet more papers on 'that organism'.

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1. M P Jevons. Celbenin resistant staphylococci. *BMJ* 1961i 124-5.