

Obituary

Dr Colin McDougall

Dr. Colin McDougall passed away peacefully on Thursday 16th February 2006. He made important intellectual and practical contributions to our understanding of leprosy and disease management.

Colin qualified in medicine in Edinburgh in 1946 and was awarded the Burn-Murdoch Medal in Clinical Medicine. He worked in the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary, the Radcliffe Infirmary in Oxford and in general practice before joining the Royal Singapore Anti-Tuberculosis Association in 1953, where he worked for 3 years. He then trained in clinical (internal) medicine at the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital and St. Bartholomew's Hospital, London. He then went abroad again, working in Sumatra, Aden and Algeria, before being appointed Leprosy Specialist to the Ministry of Health in Zambia in 1967.

The leprosy programme in Zambia then was centred around leprosaria and mission run institutions with one government referral hospital. No staff were trained in leprosy control work, so Zambian Medical Assistants were urgently trained through WHO Fellowships at the All Africa Leprosy and Rehabilitation Training Centre (ALERT) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia under the directorship of Dr. Felton Ross. When Colin visited the 'mobile' leprosy control programme set up by Dr David Molesworth and colleagues in Malawi, he could see where the benefits of regular circuits using Land Rovers, motorbikes and bicycles to bring diagnosis, treatment and disability care to people all over Malawi. He then approached LEPRO for funding for Land Rovers to change from an Institution-based approach to out-patient diagnosis and treatment. Over the next 3 years, using LEPRO funded vehicles, an outpatient programme was established in eastern Zambia.

In 1970, Colin joined Professor Graham Weddell's research group in the Department of Human Anatomy, Oxford. He then collaborated with Dr RJW Rees in a series of key studies on the histology of leprosy and the distribution of *Mycobacterium leprae* in the various body compartments using material from patients in clinical trials and experimental animals. This work led on to one of Colin's key pieces of work on nasal excretion of *M. leprae*. This work, carried out on patients in the dermatology unit in Oxford, confirmed the nasal excretion of *M. leprae*, and this has become a vital part of our understanding of the transmission of leprosy. This work was then developed further using a nude mouse model. He also worked with Dr Doug Harmann at the Leprosy Centre in London, reviewing biopsies from all over the world. His laboratory background was reflected in his enthusiasm for practical improvements to laboratory techniques, such as using the same staining for tuberculosis and leprosy bacilli in resource poor settings.

Colin also made a vital contribution to the development of multi-drug therapy for leprosy. He was a member of the group who showed that monthly rifampicin is as effective as daily rifampicin. This was very important because it meant that rifampicin then became an affordable part of the MDT regimen. It also facilitated the concept of supervised monthly

therapy, which was then widely implemented and has probably been critical in preventing the development of rifampicin resistance. Colin's links with the Oxfam health unit in Oxford also led to the development of pre-packaged blister packs for MDT. These are now used worldwide and have made it easier for patients to remember to take their medication and so to complete their course of MDT. This has helped to reduce the relapse rate. His enormous academic input is reflected in his publications which comprise over 150 papers in journals, books, book chapters and reports.

Colin had a deep interest in education, especially in providing appropriate teaching materials. With LEPRO he established a prize essay competition for UK medical students. This still runs, and high quality essays continue to be produced. In this issue of *Leprosy Review*, we have published last year's prize winning entry. He and Dr RJW Rees also put themselves out to help place medical students on electives and so promote interest in leprosy.

Colin was Editor of *Leprosy Review* from 1978 to 1988. Under his editorship, the journal published key articles on MDT and published important conference proceedings. He then continued to serve as a sub-editor until his death, and was a highly valued member of the *Leprosy Review* team. He had that precious ability to see and extract the vital kernel in a manuscript and was skilled at working with authors, especially from non-English speaking countries and helping them to improve their manuscripts.

Colin combined academic interests in leprosy with a practical field based perspective, and he was frequently invited to review programmes. His work took him to leprosy programmes in Ethiopia, Sudan, Peru and Bangladesh. He visited Orissa, India many times and was involved in speaking and teaching there.

Perhaps because of the huge changes that Colin saw in the management of leprosy during his working life, he was an enthusiastic member of the Leprosy History Project and donated books, materials, contacts and time to the project.

Colin retired in 1998, but continued to write, travel and give advice. One of Colin's best attributes was his generosity, and he always had time for people. Many people across the world have been helped by Colin with papers or practical suggestions. He was also a warm and generous host, and many overseas visitors enjoyed his Oxfordshire home.

Colin's last gift to the leprosy community was a celebration of his life, which was held at his farmhouse home. Here family and colleagues heard about his life and work over an excellent lunch and our spirits were lifted by a jazz band.

*Diana NJ Lockwood
Irene Allen*