Humphrey Kay

Dr Humphrey Kay, who has been editor of this journal since 1972, has now retired from the editorial chair. This issue is to celebrate his contribution to the *Journal of Clinical Pathology* and to the Association of Clinical Pathologists.

Humphrey's training and career span and reflect the changing practices in clinical pathology that have occurred in the last 30 years. His eclectic approach made him an ideal successor to Gordon Signy, guiding the journal through a period of major change when the very concept of clinical pathology as a discipline has been under question. His success has been outstanding, and the *Journal of Clinical Pathology* is recognised internationally for its contributions to clinical practice and medical science.

He was educated at Bryanston and St Thomas' Hospital Medical School, graduating in 1945. After national service in the RAF (including duties with the Aden Protectorate Levies) he returned to St Thomas' Hospital. His training was that of a clinical pathologist, rotating through the various disciplines and including a period seconded to Portsmouth. In 1956 he was appointed consultant at the Royal Marsden Hospital. The nature of the work there orientated his researches to malignant disease, but his approach to the problems has been wide and not constrained by limitations of a particular discipline. He has been quick to seize new opportunities and to exploit advances, crossing artificial boundaries and regarding pathology as a whole.

Although his interests have been wide, increasingly they have focused on haematological disease and specifically on leukaemia. In 1957 he initiated a fetal tissue bank when it seemed likely that grafted fetal haematopoietic cells might successfully repopulate the bone marrow. The bank was an imaginative innovation though the initial premise was not realised. It proved, however, to be an immense success for collecting and distributing fetal tissues to virologists and embryologists, and its continuing support was undertaken by the Medical Research Council. The history of the Fetal Tissue Bank and its further development are described elsewhere in this issue by Dr Sylvia Lawler, who is now responsible for its function.

Humphrey Kay has for many years played an important role in organising and overseeing the trials that the Medical Research Council has sponsored in relation to treatment of leukaemia and allied disorders. He served as Secretary to the Council's Leukaemia Committee from its inception in 1968. Initially, the role of the committee was to advise and assist the Council in the promotion of research into problems of leukaemia, particularly the evaluation of new or different methods of treatment, but in 1972 the committee was reconstituted to move its emphasis away from clinical trials to a more general advisory and review function. Though the Leukaemia Committee was disbanded in 1977 he remains Secretary of the Leukaemia Steering Committee, which maintains supervision of the Council working parties on leukaemia in children and adults. He holds, moreover, a Medical Research Council grant to finance his running of the Leukaemia Trials Office at the Royal Marsden Hospital which plans, initiates, co-ordinates, and analyses trials in leukaemia, multiple myeloma, and polycythemia rubra vera.

It is clear from this incomplete exposition of his professional work that Humphrey Kay is a committed man, and it is remarkable that he was able to take up with such enthusiasm and vigour editorship of the journal in addition to his other duties. It was, however, the very breadth of his training and experience coupled with his recognised haematological authority that gave him the status and position from which he has been able to place his own unequivocal stamp upon the journal.

He has been a critical editor whose constant criteria in judging papers have been their scientific validity and clinical importance. His criticisms, however, have always been tempered by constructive suggestions, particularly towards young or inexperienced authors. The breadth of clinical pathology poses problems with the division of interests between developing

specialties. Humphrey has emphasised the unity rather than the divisions in pathology and encouraged contributions that break down artificial boundaries. He has been properly concerned with the delivery of high-quality laboratory services to the patient. Management, in its broadest sense, is important to him, and he has used the journal to propagate, for example, views of safety in the laboratory and the cost effectiveness of pathology services.

He has an eye for the wider world and has fostered strong overseas links. The editorial board includes active members from Europe and the United States of America, and the increasing number of papers from Europe match his conviction that the journal should serve a wider audience than those trained in the Anglo-Saxon tradition. As he retires he may care to reflect that under his care the *Journal of Clinical Pathology* has increased its influence not only in Britain but overseas and that its relevance, as it stresses the unity of laboratory effort, has increased despite the growth of specialism.

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about Humphrey is the apparently effortless ease with which he takes on and succeeds at so many professional activities. Ease of accomplishment is striking, too, in his private life. He is a musician of some merit; he is skilled at producing light verse, and (anonymously) was a winner in the *New Statesman* competition. Though he lives at Earl's Court, it is clear from his enthusiasms that he is most at home in his country cottage where he is expert and knowledgeable about wild flowers and birds, and where his gardening skills, not inconsiderable, are allowed expression. In all these many activities perhaps this ease arises from the consistent support of his wife April, herself a rheumatologist, and their family. The completeness of the man, professional and private, is a reflection of his family, and in honouring him we also pay tribute to this continual support.

This issue of the *Journal of Clinical Pathology* has been written in honour of Humphrey Kay by his friends, colleagues, and officers of the Association of Clinical Pathologists. The contributions cover many fields of pathology but are free papers not necessarily related to Humphrey's previous work. Nevertheless it is surprising how many of them are relevant to subjects on which this accomplished man has worked in the past. Humphrey Kay is still young. He has already contributed much to medicine, to this journal, and to the Association of Clinical Pathologists, for which we are most grateful. He has much more to contribute, and we are happy that he will continue his guidance on the editorial board.

GERARD SLAVIN

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