

MEMORIALS

## In Memoriam: Professor Sir Eldryd Hugh Owen Parry. KCMG OBE (1930–2022)

A personal tribute to a mentor, friend, distinguished physician, and administrator.



Professor Sir Eldryd Parry was born in Cardiff on November 27, 1930, into a family of doctors. His parents were general practitioners, and several other relatives were also doctors. He studied medicine at Emmanuel College Cambridge and Cardiff University. During his postgraduate medical training in cardiology at Royal Postgraduate Medical School, Hammersmith, London, he applied for and got a job as registrar in medicine at University College Hospital, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria in 1960. This started a love affair with Africa in community medicine, research, and medical education. He completed his training and continued in Ibadan as a lecturer in medicine. He was passionate about preventive and community medicine. Along with Professor Theophilus Ogunlesi, they conceived the Ibarapa Community and Primary Health Care Programme, with initial funding from the Rockefeller Foundation, in 1963. Several generations of Ibadan medical students (including myself) greatly benefitted from the 8-week Igbo-Ora community posting, often a highlight of the medical training. This has now been extended to include student nurses, midwives, dentists, and hygienists.

Professor Parry left Ibadan in 1966 to Haile Selassie University, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia as Wellcome Fellow and then Associate Professor of Medicine. He returned to Nigeria in 1969, as Professor of Medicine at Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria, Kaduna State, Nigeria.

During his time at ABU, he realised that medical students regularly quoted Western medical textbooks, often with no relevance to their environments. Believing this to be unacceptable, Professor Parry organised and edited a new textbook, *Principles of Medicine in Africa*, which remains the definitive textbook for tropical medicine till date. The fifth edition is due to be published in 2023.

In 1977, Professor Parry left Zaria to become the foundation dean of a new medical school at University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria. It is likely that his experience of the Ibarapa project in Ibadan informed his introduction of the radical Community-based Experience and Service (COBES) at Ilorin. From 1980 to 1985, he was dean and professor of medicine at the now Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana.

Professor Parry returned to the United Kingdom (UK) and in 1988, with his wife Helen, founded Tropical Health and Education Trust (THET), which he chaired until 2007. I first met Prof Parry through Mr John Rennie, Consultant Colorectal Surgeon at Kings College, London, at the Royal Society of Medicine in London just after my appointment as a National Health Service (NHS), UK Consultant Surgeon in 1999. I was keen to contribute to surgical services and training in sub-Saharan Africa, and THET provided a platform for this.

At THET, we applied for and were awarded a national lottery grant to train rural medical officers in basic and emergency surgical skills in Africa including Northern Ghana, Jimma in Ethiopia and Somaliland. I became the surgical instructor for the Northern Ghana project, initially covering the Northern and Upper East Regions (UER) and finally Upper West Region during a 10-year period. We conducted annual trips to these regions for about 3 weeks with a team of surgeons, anaesthetists and senior nurses. Depending on other needs identified during the pre-visit assessment or post-visit impact assessments, other specialists like orthopaedic surgeons and obstetricians accompanied the team. The regional hospital served as our base for the training workshops for basic life support, basic and emergency surgical skills (using dry and wet labs). We then travelled to the district hospitals for outpatient clinics, ward rounds, and operating sessions with the local staff. We trained about 100 medical officers, 2,000 nurses, midwives, and anaesthetic technicians.



Professor Parry (2nd right) with Richard Horton (right, Editor of Lancet), visiting the surgical team, John Lourie (left, Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon, Oxford), Olujimi Coker (2nd left, Consultant Colorectal Surgeon, Doncaster), in Bolgutunga, UER, Ghana in 2001.

Sir Eldryd was a brilliant mentor and an inspiring friend. He taught me humility and the need to ensure proper needs assessment before visiting any resource-poor

setting. This was to ensure that training and support was targeted to the needs of the healthcare workers and population, and not what we thought they wanted or worse still, donating what we no longer needed! THET grew from such collaborations to institutional partnerships for health between United Kingdom institutions and defined rural populations. The partnerships have now matured to national collaborations. I was privileged to serve as a trustee on the board of THET between 2006 and 2010.

Sir Eldryd received many accolades. In 1982, he received the OBE (Order of the British Empire) and was knighted (KCMG: Knight Commander of St. Michael and St George) in 2011 for services to healthcare developments in Africa. In 2007, he was given a lifetime achievement award by the Royal Society of Medicine. He had Honorary Fellowships from Cardiff University, Emmanuel College Cambridge, London School of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene, Royal College of Surgeons of England, West African College of Physicians and Ghana College of Physicians and Surgeons.

He is survived by his wife, three daughters and a son.  
May his Soul Rest in Peace.

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