

## Obituary

### Anthony Barker CBE, FRCS

3 September 1920–30 August 1993

Anthony Barker was Consultant in Accident and Emergency (A&E) Medicine at St George's Hospital, Tooting from 1975 to 1985. Prior to that he, and his wife Maggie, worked for the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG) in the Charles Johnson Memorial Hospital, Ngutu, South Africa. His 28 years of work for the SPG has been well documented in the obituaries of the national press.<sup>1–4</sup> They died together while cycling on their tandem on 30 August 1993 after being struck by a lorry in the Lake District, 2 days after their Golden Wedding Anniversary.

Anthony Barker was appointed to St George's Hospital, Hyde Park Corner (closed 1976) and Tooting Hospital as its first ever A&E Consultant. He could often be seen cycling between the two sites on his tandem with Maggie, who was also appointed as a part-time Clinical Assistant in A&E.

Anthony Barker's lasting contributions to our specialty have, however, been sadly overlooked by the national press.<sup>1–4</sup> He demonstrated the importance of senior doctors working on the shop floor of the A&E Department, and highlighted the vital contribution to be made by on-going situational teaching.

Anthony Barker saw vividly the problems besetting our newly formed specialty. He appreciated that he needed to do that which other Consultants could not do, i.e. be present in the department providing a direct service to patients and providing leadership upfront. His Consultant colleagues always knew where to find him, and respected him for his 'hands-on' approach to the job. Anthony Barker would kindly but firmly, ensure fair play in his department supporting his junior staff and ensuring that they were not 'whipping boys' for the on-call teams. Although in some ways this was working like a junior doctor, he realized it was the best way to earn respect for the specialty of A&E medicine. This principle is echoed by today's A&E trainees.<sup>5</sup>

Anthony Barker realized that A&E offered a unique opportunity for teaching on patients as they presented and that such knowledge lasted longer than when taught retrospectively. The medical students hung on his every word, enjoying the freshness and vitality of the real world; every patient was a teaching

and learning opportunity. St George's recognized his skills, creating a 4-week A&E firm, and appointing Anthony Barker Vice-Dean (1979–1985). The senior house officers felt secure in the knowledge that the boss was always available to respond to any question and assist with any problem; Anthony Barker made it clear that this was the most important work of an A&E Consultant.<sup>6</sup>

Few of us would tear up the Merit Award form, as I saw Anthony do. He viewed Merit Awards as a pernicious system encouraging A&E Consultants off their shop floors to perform duties other than those for which they were paid. The medico-legal reports were summarily executed in his own hand. A part-time secretary was more than enough for him and his office was both the senior house officers cloakroom and the microscope room.

His material needs were few. He had the inner strength and confidence to eschew self-promotion, and the other weaknesses of human nature. His was an incisive intellect. Those of us who were fortunate enough to work with him appreciated his insight, integrity and honesty. We were grateful for the generosity of his warm understanding friendship and for showing us the way forward, even when we demonstrated that we could never match his standards, being so worldly and materialistic by comparison. His trainees are indeed fortunate.

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### REFERENCES

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