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Obituary

Hugh Campbell Orr, MB, ChB, FRCP(Glas)

Hugh Campbell Orr, formerly consultant ophthalmic surgeon to Wolverhampton and Midland Counties Eye Infirmary, died on 30 April aged 81. He was born at Hamilton, and during the first world war enlisted in the Royal Artillery, serving 3 years in France. He graduated in medicine from Glasgow University in 1924 and shortly afterwards was appointed house surgeon to Wolverhampton Eye Infirmary. He had originally intended to take up neurology, but Ophthalmology claimed him and he never regretted his change in direction. He was appointed assistant surgeon in 1925 and, after qualifying FRFPS (Glasgow), honorary surgeon in 1934. His desire for progress frequently led him into dispute with the governing council of the hospital, but the force of his argument and his determination usually won the day. With the introduction of the National Health Service he became consultant surgeon, and after his retirement from the service in 1963 he continued in his private practice, school clinics, and general ophthalmic services work.

His professional career spanned years in which tremendous changes occurred in ophthalmology, with progressive refinement of surgical instruments and technique, and it says much for his ability that he always kept abreast of these developments, maintaining that surgeons could not mark time, only go forwards or backwards. His early interests were in industrial injuries and retinal colour photography, but in later years he became more interested in vascular and degenerative diseases of the retina and was a firm believer in the value of vasodilator drugs. Greatly troubled by the increasing number of patients referred with senile macular degeneration, against current thought he foresaw the possibility that it might eventually yield to treatment and merited thorough investigation. Although he did not have the facilities to do research into the condition himself, he encouraged others to do so and the renewed interest of recent years gave him considerable satisfaction.

During the postwar years he travelled much in Europe

and was held in high regard by many ophthalmologists whose clinics he visited. Apart from the strictly formal rounds on these occasions he valued as much the free discussions on ophthalmic matters and interchange of ideas during the social gatherings. He was never afraid to defend his often controversial views, but after a hard-fought disputation would often wryly quote from his favourite Omar Khayyam: 'Myself when young did eagerly frequent, Doctor Saint, and heard great argument About it and about; but evermore Came out by the same door as in I went'.

He had a reputation as a strict disciplinarian towards both his patients and his staff, but he took great pains to teach surgery to his juniors, and although they went in daily fear of his disapproval he and Mrs Orr were charming and generous hosts when they entertained successive house surgeons and registrars to an evening's relaxation at the theatre at Stratford-on-Avon. His work dominated his whole life, and practically his only leisure activity was reading, but in later years much time was devoted to his only daughter, disabled by chronic illness, whose death came only a few weeks before his own.

For many years he was the secretary of the Staffordshire Branch of the BMA. He was president of the Midland Ophthalmological Society in 1947–9 and in 1971 served as deputy master of the Oxford Congress, where he was a familiar figure.

The theme of Hugh Campbell Orr's life was to work and to serve. He served the local community well as an ophthalmologist and his name was a byword in Wolverhampton; and he worked until only 5 days before his death—truly a life-time of dedication to his calling.

B.R.K.

Notes

Courses at Institute

The following courses will be held at Institute of Ophthalmology: Revision course in eyelid and lacrimal surgery, 27–29 October 1980 (fee £50). Recent major advances in the management of ocular trauma, 26–28 November 1980 (fee £75). Indications and techniques in the ophthalmic management of retinovascular disease, 1–3 December 1980 (fee £75). Applications to the Dean's Office, Institute of Ophthalmology, 17–25 Cayton Street, London EC1V 9AT.

Laser workshop

A laser workshop for ophthalmic diseases will be held at the Singapore General Hospital on 26–28 September 1980. It is organised by the Academy of Medicine, Singapore, and the Australian College of Ophthalmologists. Details from Laser Workshop, 606–610 Singapore Polyclinic, Specialists' Centre, Orchard Road, Singapore 0923.



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