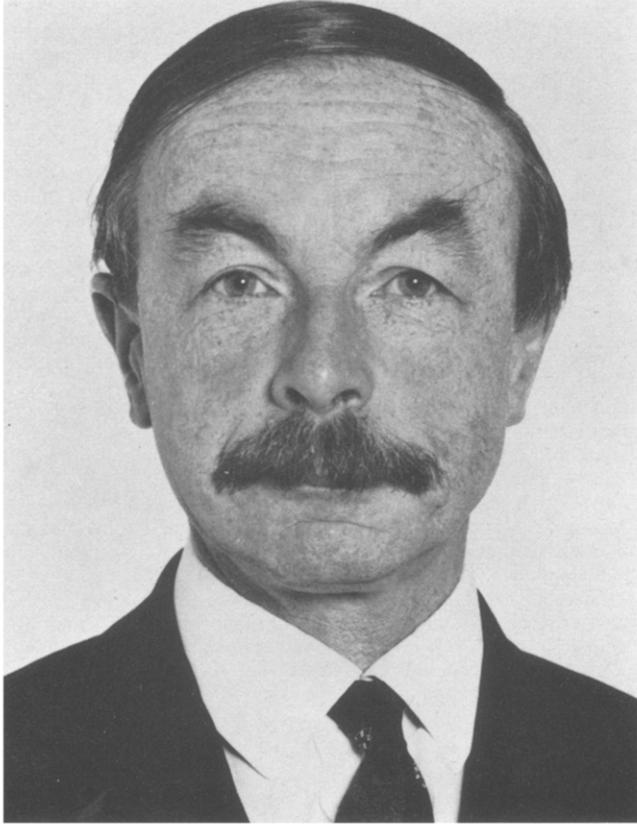


OBITUARY

Lester Williams Kay, 1921-1982



Lester Williams Kay died in hospital on Thursday 3rd June 1982 after a protracted illness.

'Lester', as he was affectionately known to innumerable postgraduate students, colleagues and friends, was one of that small group of teachers who placed British oral surgery upon the map. His role in this respect was largely that of a writer both of learned articles, and of lucid highly popular textbooks. He was also a widely respected clinical teacher of the art of oral surgery, a responsibility which he ably fulfilled at the Institute of Dental Surgery/Eastman Dental Hospital London, as Senior Lecturer in Oral Surgery from 1962, and which was further acknowledged by the conferment upon him of the title of Reader in Oral Surgery in 1968.

Born on May 18th 1921 in Atherton, Lancashire, his first professional work was in journalism with Northern Newspapers in St Helens. Following the outbreak of war he served in the Royal Air Force as an air-crew navigator from 1941 to 1946, spending the last five months of his service as a radar supervisor.

Upon demobilisation, Lester Kay entered Guy's Hospital in 1946 as one of the first pair of Combined Course students, graduating in dentistry in 1952 and in medicine in 1955. After holding registrar posts in the departments of Conservative Dentistry and Casualty at Guy's, he satisfied his pre-registration requirements with appointments as House Surgeon to the Metropolitan Ear, Nose and Throat Hospital, London, and as House Physician at Sevenoaks Hospital in Kent.

In 1957 he accepted the post of Registrar in Oral Surgery at the Eastman Dental Hospital, and it was here, with the exception of a three years appointment as Lecturer in Oral Surgery in the University of Durham from 1959–1962, that Lester made his professional home.

From his 63 original articles, his M.D.S. thesis and some 29 major publications one must select as outstanding the following texts. The Impacted Wisdom Tooth (1965), Benign Cystic Lesions of the Jaws (1966), Drugs in Dentistry (1969), The Prevention of Complications in Oral Surgery (1971) and his editing of the Transactions of the IVth International Conference on Oral Surgery (1972).

His research work included a major study on pericoronitis for which he was awarded the degree of Master in Dental Surgery in the University of Newcastle, and extensive studies on the clinical anatomy of oral surgery, based upon the Department of Physical Anthropology at Cambridge. A measure of his encyclopaedic interest is to be seen in his analysis of over 2,000 maxillae with reference to the normal dimensional limits of the nasopalatine or incisive fossa; an analysis which was to provide a scientific basis for quantitative assessment of this region when suspect radiolucencies are being evaluated. From 1973 to 1974 he performed a similar analysis on 2,700 mandibles providing essential data on the site of the mental foramina, the incidence of lingual perforation of the cortex in the third molar region, and the variations in position and morphology of the lingula.

Lester Kay assumed administrative office with the same serious generosity that he brought to his teaching amongst which were, Editor of this journal from 1968 to 1973; Dental Editor for Wolfe Publications from 1974; Member of the Standing Committee of the Board of Studies in Dentistry in the University of London; Member of the Central Academic Council of the postgraduate Medical Federation of the University of London; Member of the Executive Subcommittee of the British Dental Association; Member of Council of the British Association of Oral Surgeons. He was Head of the Department of Casualty and Admissions at the Eastman Dental Hospital, and upon the untimely death of Professor Killey in 1976, Lester accepted the additional burden of the Department of Oral Surgery.

His examinerships included those for the B.D.S. and L.D.S. in Durham, the B.D.S. in the University of Newcastle, and the L.D.S. for the Royal College of Surgeons of England. Overseas he regularly examined for the B.D.S. in Lagos and Baghdad.

Lester was a gentle man. His patients, nurses, students and professional colleagues uniformly found themselves in a relationship of fondness and respect. He was also that most desirable rarity amongst professionals, a true character. If you entered a contest of wit with Lester, his puckish sense of humour, his quick mind, his colourful flights of ideas, would leave most standing, and like any true professional he wouldn't wait for you to catch up. However, at the end of the exchange, if you were attentive, you would see a generous twinkle in his eye and know that he had been sharing fun with you, not at your expense.

His early retirement was dictated by an illness that taxed him both physically and intellectually. Lester's insight into the relentless nature of this disability and his positive acceptance of the inevitable outcome, was nothing short of heroic.

The writer, the teacher, the researcher, the surgeon, the administrator. Taken individually any of these roles require loving cooperative support on the part of one's family. Taken together in one man, and with the additional burden of chronic illness, the demands were vast. His wife Jill, their two sons and their daughter were able to provide what was needed. We extend to them our thanks.