

Obituary

ALLEN J. WHITAKER

O.B.E., F.R.C.S., F.R.C.G.P.

Allen Whitaker died at his home on 22 February 1976, two years after he had retired from general practice. He was 70.

A son of the late Sir James Smith Whitaker, who was a distinguished administrator and sometime senior medical officer at the Ministry of Health, Allen devoted his talents and his energies particularly to general practice.

Having qualified in 1931 from University College Hospital and held resident appointments at University College Hospital, in 1932 he joined his elder brother, Donald, as a partner in practice at Guildford. This he left temporarily to serve in the R.N.V.R. during the war; he was mentioned in dispatches for his work with casualties in the D-Day Normandy invasion.

Soon after rejoining the Guildford practice, he was appointed clinical assistant in the Orthopaedic Department at the Royal Surrey County Hospital, a post that he held continuously until near his retirement.

Although his heart was in general medicine, and he did not enjoy committee work, his clear, logical mind, and his ability to translate his thoughts into concise speech, inevitably forced him into administrative posts serving the British Medical Association and the local medical committee.

It was probably with the formation of the Royal College of General Practitioners that Allen began to make his most significant contribution to medicine and the community. A founder member, he was on the board of the South-east England Faculty from 1955–1958, and from 1963–1965. He was chairman of the Undergraduate Education Committee in 1954, chairman of the Faculty Board in 1959, and Provost from 1960–1962. He was a member of

the third Council of the College in 1956–1957, and served again from 1963–1965. In 1967 he was appointed Royal College of General Practitioners representative on the Council of the Royal College of Surgeons, on which he sat till 1972; during this period he acted as observer on the Council of the Royal College of General Practitioners.

During this very active period he both wrote and spoke extensively, particularly about practice organisation and education for general practice. He was a trainer, but for many years before it became the accepted college policy, many senior medical students had spent short periods at Guildford, receiving their first taste of general practice; this personal instruction of students and young graduates was a part of general practice that Allen really enjoyed and he was outstandingly good at it.

In 1967, in recognition of his services to medicine, he was awarded the *O.B.E.*; he was made a Fellow of the Royal College of General Practitioners in 1968, and in 1975 his work on the Council of the Royal College of Surgeons was recognised by his being made a Fellow *ad eundem* of the Royal College of Surgeons.

If this short account of some of his achievements emphasises his work within the Royal College of General Practitioners, it was really in his own practice with his partners, surrounded by devoted patients, that he found his greatest happiness, and for them his enthusiasm and drive, as well as the loving care that he lavished on them, continued unabated, even beyond the day of his retirement: a great doctor and a great friend.

S. N. COLE