

Out of Hours

Mollie McBride:

an appreciation

"Many College leaders have spoken about social deprivation: only Mollie McBride upped sticks and went to work where conditions were particularly difficult."



MOLLIE MCBRIDE MBE FRCGP AFOM 1931–2013

The sudden death of Mollie McBride aged 82 robs British general practice of a larger-than-life character who did much to develop general practice in the north west of England and nationally.

After qualifying from Liverpool, where she was Lady President of the Guild of Undergraduates, she worked as house physician to Lord Cohen of Birkenhead. She went straight into general practice in Chester and, with John Bligh, developed it into one of the best known in the region. Mollie was very active in the Mersey Faculty where she was both Chairman and Provost.

Mollie McBride was one of the few GPs in England to penetrate the power structure of her regional health authority (RHA), using her personality and wit to do so. She served as a GP member of the Mersey RHA for 6 years, fostering several local reforms.

Her husband died in 1986 and 3 years later she stood for election as Honorary Secretary of the RCGP. Her hustings speech was a model, making pertinent points while getting the Council to roar with laughter. She was the first woman to hold this key College post, from 1989 to 1994. She found herself in a big administrative job at a difficult time. The Thatcher/Clarke reforms were the first of a set of major changes for the NHS and caused great turbulence within the College. Mollie often rang members directly, was always ready to talk and had a calming influence. She was

very popular and received major awards including the Baron Dr ver Heyden de Lancey Award in 1986 and the Foundation Council Award, in 1996.

After the death of her husband, she honoured a mutual agreement and in 1990 made the dramatic move from Chester to general practice in the East End of London. Many College leaders have spoken about social deprivation: only Mollie McBride upped sticks and went to work where conditions were particularly difficult.

She took leading government officials and NHS leaders in person to her practice to see for themselves how difficult things could be in the front line in socially-deprived areas. Several of these visitors were profoundly influenced by seeing at first hand the difficulties faced by GPs, often working in the shadow of multimillion pound NHS institutions.

Mollie McBride was a warm person who spoke fondly of her husband and her four sons. She had enormous energy, which she put to good use in a friendly, unassuming way. She achieved much and will be greatly missed.

Sir Denis Pereira Gray

Consultant, St Leonard's Research Practice, Exeter, Past President, RCGP, and Past Chairman, Academy of Medical Royal Colleges.

DOI: 10.3399/bjgp14X676500

ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE

Sir Denis Pereira Gray

St Leonard's Research Practice, 9 Marlborough Road, Exeter, EX2 4TJ, UK

E-mail: denis.pereiragray@btinternet.com