

Out of Hours

Maurice Wood:

an appreciation



28 June 1922–11 March 2016

Maurice Wood, BS, MB, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1941–1945, attended his 70th class reunion last year, traversing the Atlantic from his home in Stoney Creek at Wintergreen, Virginia, US. Dr Wood died at home on 11 March 2016, leaving a stunning legacy of friendship, doctoring, leadership, investigation, mentoring, and inspiration for generations of health professionals. His career was a tale set in both the UK and the US.

In the UK he served in the Royal Army Medical Corps from 1946–1949 as major and senior medical officer in the Middle East and as a GP from 1950–1971 in South Shields, England. During these years in practice he was Vice Chairman of the North East Faculty, Royal College of General Practitioners. He was a generalist full of curiosity about his patients and the community in which they dwelled, with particular interests in psychiatry, maternity care, and the expanded role of nurses in general practice. He often laced his conversations with insights garnered during these years concerning the nature of being someone's doctor and where opportunity existed to improve.

To the great benefit of the US, he accepted a faculty position in 1971 at the Medical College of Virginia in Richmond, Virginia, and subsequently relocated with his wife, Erica, and daughter, Jane, to the US, while his sons, Roger and Michael, remained in the UK. From his Virginia academic home, he proceeded to have international impact on the

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evolution of family medicine. With colleagues David W. Marsland and Fitzhugh Mayo, the seminal 'Virginia Study' was published in 1976,¹ arguably a foundational breakthrough paper in its careful description of the content of practice and its distribution by age and sex, triggering a flood of responses focused on clinical care, education, and training for practice, in what was then only an imagined family medicine research enterprise.

In partnership with his dear friend, Professor Henk Lamberts, he championed the development of the International Classification of Health Problems in Primary Care, and fostered it through revisions into the International Classification of Primary Care (ICPC-2-R).² Dr Wood cultivated the formation of the first US national primary care Practice Based Research Network (PBRN) as a member of the Ambulatory Sentinel Practice Network's founding steering committee.³ There are now more than 100 descendant PBRNs operating. Dr Wood was among the first family physicians elected in 1982 to the prestigious Institute of Medicine (IOM), now known as the National Academy of Medicine, and in 1983–1984 served as chairman of the IOM's study committee on Community Oriented Primary Care, a report that shines brightly now amid renewed interest in redesigning practice to address social determinants of health, meeting the needs of the community in which practices hold forth.

Perhaps Dr Wood will be best remembered, however, for being the founding president of the North American Primary Care Research Group (NAPCRG),⁴ incubating the organisation in his home department of family medicine, serving as president from 1972–1983. With a few of the

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other founders of family medicine, he filled the vacant space where those studying front-line clinical practice could come together to share and develop ideas, report findings, and learn across disciplines about the troubles besetting people in their communities. What started with a handful of aspirational leaders is now poised for its 44th Annual Meeting in Colorado this year, and hundreds of people from around 15–20 countries will gather again to learn, recharge, and renew their investigational quests. Dr Wood established and modelled what has become known as a 'signature' of NAPCRG: a safe place where researchers of varying experience can come together and be built up, not torn down. In recognition of the thousands of investigators touched and inspired by Dr Wood, every year NAPCRG recognises an individual for lifetime contributions to primary care research with 'The Maurice Wood Award.'

It should not go unnoted how much Dr Wood enjoyed a good party, dancing, skiing, the arts, and fellowship. At the NAPCRG meeting in New York City in 2014, he hosted a small group of friends at the New York Metropolitan Opera, slipping back into his hotel after.

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DOI: 10.3399/bjgp16X685057

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