

Michael Huntley Faulkner:

an appreciation



Michael Huntley Faulkner.

Born 14 October 1946; died 21 August 2019

A THOROUGHLY GENERAL PRACTITIONER

It is a rare thing nowadays for a general practitioner to be in one practice for 35 years. 'Portfolio' GPs and all manner of part-time practitioners have become the norm, the chief element of the 'part-timeness' being perhaps the distinction between daytime practice and 'out-of-hours'.

When Michael Faulkner began his medical practice in Stokesley, North Yorkshire, 45 years ago, the life of a GP was set in a pattern relatively unchanged for many decades. There was still a feeling within the medical profession that a young doctor entering general practice did so because his entry into specialties had either been unsuccessful or, in the early stages of specialist training, disappointing.

Not so with Mike Faulkner. His approach to being a GP was splendidly positive. He and I started at Guy's Hospital Medical School on the same October day in 1964. We were both 'grammar school boys' from the North Country; he from Lincolnshire, I from Cheshire. We found ourselves in the company of mainly 'public school types' from the Home Counties and yet friendships quickly developed as we settled into that remarkably sharp-focused environment of a London teaching hospital.

Student and houseman life and times were still very much in the *Doctor in the House* mode with professors and

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consultants in high orbit above the juniors. It all seemed a million miles from GP surgeries and the visiting rounds.

Very few of our contemporaries had general practice in their sights but Mike Faulkner was an exception. From very early on in his student days he knew he wanted to be a GP. I can't remember the source of his single-mindedness; perhaps he had encountered a committed family doctor in his childhood.

As a student, when one showed prowess in this or that subject teachers would start hinting that probably this was one's *métier* and a move to specialisation was desirable sooner or later. General practice figured hardly at all in the students' view of the medical world. At the end of the third clinical year, a student could, if they wished, spend a fortnight in a general practice; it was entirely optional. Mike seized the opportunity and this cemented his wish to become a GP. Doubtless he had many a nudge to specialise for he was an able student, intercalating a BSc in physiology and doing so well in his first junior house appointment at Guy's that he was offered (and accepted) a second 'plum' Guy's job.

Thereafter, however, the London teaching hospital scene and medical specialisation lost him. He was off back to the North to undertake vocational training for general practice in Teesside at a time when such training was not compulsory. Mike however had the academic rigour to know that thoroughgoing experience in the hospital specialties particularly relevant to general practice was essential.

From his vocational training course he acquired the membership of the still quite young Royal College of General Practitioners and indeed he won the Fraser

Rose Gold Medal for the highest MRCGP marks in the country. In a real sense, Mike embodied the spirit and *raison d'être* of the GP's college. To practise 'Caritas' a doctor needed to attend constantly to their continuing education.

Mike entered a partnership in his Stokesley training practice and stayed there for 35 years. He was the practice GP trainer throughout and I've no doubt that the very long list of young GPs who looked to Mike for guidance realised their very good fortune, and in their own subsequent practice lives found themselves often wondering 'Now, what would Mike Faulkner do in this situation?'

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