FELLOWSHIP AFFAIRS

Dr D G James FRCP and the Fellowship of Postgraduate Medicine

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Dr D G James recently retired as Vice President of the Fellowship of Postgraduate Medicine. The following article is based on a speech given at a dinner at the Athenaeum Club on 10 October 2002 to thank Dr James for his contributions to the Fellowship of Postgraduate Medicine over 50 years.

Just another extroverted Welshman? Yet another rugby playing fanatic from “the valleys”? Certainly not! David Geraint James (fig 1) has had, and continues to have, a most distinguished medical career (see below). But his contributions to the Fellowship of Postgraduate Medicine (FPM) over the last 50 years or so have been towering and immense; now that he has decided (reluctantly) to back down from the office of Vice President this seems to be an appropriate moment at which to both record and to thank him for his services to this charity.

The FPM has a long and interesting history. Following the Great War (1914–18), postgraduate medical education in London (and indeed in Britain generally) was in the doldrums; numerous doctors who had fought in the far flung corners of the empire gravitated to Britain in order to pursue postgraduate study. So dire was the deficiency that the then Minister for Health decided to assemble a team of “experts” in an attempt to find a solution to this dilemma. Included in his “team” were: Lords Dawson of Penn (1864–1945), Horder (1871–1955), and Webb-Johnson (1880–1958), Sir John Bland-Sutton Bt (1855–1936), Sir John Parkinson (1885–1976), and Sir Humphrey Rolleston Bt (1862–1944). Their brief was to produce a practical scheme for improving British postgraduate medical education—independent of government or university involvement.

Figure 1 Dr D Geraint James FRCP (1922–) with his late wife Professor Dame Sheila Sherlock FRCP, FRS (1918–2001).

The committee wisely decided to amalgamate two existing bodies—the Postgraduate Medical Association and the Fellowship of Medicine. The former had been initiated by Sir William Osler Bt (1849–1919) in 1911; he had in fact served as the first president. Therefore the FPM has an outstanding past, associated with impeccable credentials!

In the “interwar” years the FPM undertook a very valuable function; the weekly bulletin of postgraduate activities rapidly gave birth to the *Postgraduate Medical Journal* which successfully thrives to this day and was largely instrumental in fostering postgraduate medical training in the metropolis and beyond.

After the Second World War (1939–45) several “competing” bodies evolved; the Postgraduate Medical Federation was founded, and postgraduate medical centres became commonplace throughout the land. Also, the Royal Colleges and faculties took a far greater interest in postgraduate medical education, and academic units began to appear in many of Britain’s leading teaching hospitals.

Nevertheless, the FPM has kept going and many influential medical figures have been involved; a rapid scan of the minute books reveals among others (in no sort of order of priority): Maurice Davidson, A A G Lewis, John Hopewell, Sir David Innes-Williams, Lord Walton of Detchant, Harold Ellis, Sir Ronald Bodley-Scott, and Paul Turner. But, there was one thread of continuity during this 50 year period, Dr D G James, whose name appears wherever one searches—in the minutes of council meetings, annual general meetings, and executive committee meetings, and of the editorial board of the *Postgraduate Medical Journal*.

This is not the place to outline the distinguished career of Dr James other than to briefly mention his outstanding Deanship of the Royal Northern Hospital, his Presidency of most of London’s Medical Societies (including the Medical Society of London, founded in 1773), his world acclaimed contributions in the field of sarcoidosis, and by no means least, his numerous contributions to the history of medicine, especially Osleriana. A festschrift in his honour was held in 1988 (this was subsequently published in the *Postgraduate Medical Journal*), on his retirement from the National Health Service. Gerry’s contribution(s) to the FPM have therefore been enormous. It is no exaggeration to say that if we had not had Dr D G James within the Fellowship, we would certainly have had to invent him! We, who have the honour and privilege of belonging to the FPM should all be profoundly grateful for Gerry’s tremendous input into our activities over half a century.

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