

Dr Jack Tinker: 1936–2010

It is with great sadness that we announce to our readers that the Editor-in-Chief of the *British Journal of Hospital Medicine*, Dr Jack Tinker, died in April 2010.

Dr Tinker was the Editor and subsequently Editor-in-Chief of the journal for 25 years. He took on the role when the *British Journal of Hospital Medicine* was sold by Thomson to its current publishers, Mark Allen Group. Dr Tinker had been an editorial board member and when the publisher, Mark Allen, asked him to take on the role of Editor of the journal, he agreed to do so. It was a potentially precarious time as the journal moved from being a free title to a paid-for subscription journal, but Dr Tinker's commitment to the ethos of the journal, encouragement of the editorial board and dedication to publishing high-quality articles ensured that the transition was a huge success.

Dr Tinker was instrumental in the development of many phases of the journal, from the development of the exam supplement which many consultants tell us got them through their membership exams, to the launch of the MMC section aimed at supporting foundation year doctors and those who teach them.

He was a strong advocate of the importance of excellent articles, a task which was made easier by his discreet but excellent networking skills – no matter what specialty one was interested in, he always had contacts who would be more than happy to help because he had suggested them.

Professor Iqbal Singh, a board member and friend of Dr Tinker's, emphasized this: 'Jack's enthusiasm for sharing good practice focused on reaching out across the country to different regions. A joint initiative between the *British Journal of Hospital Medicine* and the

Indian Medical Association in Blackburn led to the building of very strong and lasting friendships. He especially enjoyed these joint educational meetings as they had an added personal nostalgic reminder of the early days of his marriage which were spent near Blackburn.'

Dr Tinker was always keen to try and stimulate debate – never one to toe the party line, he wanted to encourage readers to think for themselves about all sorts of issues within medicine and to make up their minds as to what they thought. He was passionate that one of the main strengths of the journal was its independence from both political and medical organizations, and was insistent that its focus should be on clinical excellence to enable doctors to develop their practice and put the latest research in context to help their patients.

A pioneer of intensive care

In the 1970s and 1980s Dr Tinker directed the Middlesex Hospital Intensive Care Unit, where he is widely credited with setting the standards of modern intensive care practice. Dr Tinker created one of the first dedicated intensive care units in the country, staffed by a team of assiduous doctors and nurses whom he had personally trained. While not the biggest unit in the country it was one of the best organized and provided a model of good practice. Through his editorship of the journal *Intensive Care Medicine*, authorship of three leading text books and coordination of multiple training courses, Dr Tinker had a far-reaching influence on today's intensive care consultants. In 1971 he helped set up the Intensive Care Society in the UK, and did much to establish intensive care as a medical speciality in its own right.

Dr Tinker's research highlights included using the Swan–Ganz catheter to measure pulmonary artery pressure and cardiac output of critically ill patients. In a key *New England Journal of Medicine* paper (Bihari et al, 1987), Dr Tinker and colleagues described how disturbances in microcirculatory blood flow led to organ failure and death in some intensive care patients. Their observations still stand today.

Regarding intensive care as a 'young man's game', Dr Tinker switched to management, in 1988 becoming Dean of Postgraduate Medicine at the North East Thames Regional Health Authority. He was among the first to institute proper training programmes for house officers and junior medical staff, with his model of postgraduate departments subsequently becoming the norm throughout the country. Professor Parveen Kumar, who worked with him at the time,



recalled: 'He always gave very wise and sensible advice. Those early days of the post-graduate deanery were fraught with difficulties as there were a lot of vested interests and the medical world could not see the wider picture ahead. Jack managed to charm them all and achieved what very few would have been able to do.'

In 'retirement', Dr Tinker carried on working at the Royal Society of Medicine, first as Honorary Sub-Dean, then between 1998 and 2002 as Dean. Under his leadership the academic conference programme went from 11 major meetings in 1995 to more than 150 conferences and courses in 2002. These focussed strongly on the needs of clinicians, be it learning about the latest clinical treatments or the Fundamentals of Law courses which helped the medical and legal professions to understand what was required of both when they met in the legal arena.

In 2000, as chair of the ethics committee of Dr Foster (the company publishing comparative performance information about NHS hospitals), Dr Tinker took on the task of listening to complaints and regulating the work of the organization. He established the rules under which the committee worked, including legal and financial independence from the business.

A man for all the people

In the wide range of activities he undertook, Dr Tinker was always supportive and immensely courteous. Regardless of whether he was talking to a professor or a medical student, he took complete interest in their thoughts and ideas. Dr Diana Holdright, a board member of the *British Journal of Hospital Medicine*, noted: 'He was very talented in many different areas of medicine but also a very humble man, an unusual but wonderful combination.'

Dr Tinker always encouraged independent thought – he was not one to throw his weight about but he would make certain that his opinion was known if he thought it was necessary. Dr Neville Goodman, a former board member of the journal, commented: 'He had that knack of making it appear as if he wasn't really doing anything, but of course he was: he was pivotal.' This rare skill will be sorely missed by all who were fortunate enough to work with him. **BJHM**

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Bihari D, Smithies M, Gimson A, Tinker J (1987)
The effects of vasodilation with prostacyclin on oxygen delivery and uptake in critically ill patients. *N Engl J Med* 317(7): 397–403

Mark Allen writes: Dr Jack Tinker was a very special person, a man of enormous understated intelligence and humanity, someone who rose to the top of the medical pyramid but who was totally without pomp. He was a northerner who, although living the last 41 years of his life in London, cherished his roots and always stayed true to the core values of honesty, humility, loyalty and integrity.

Jack was an exceptionally talented and versatile doctor, one of a minute number of that breed who could juggle different medical balls at the same time: clinical, research, managerial, industry and publishing.

I first got to know Jack in 1984. I had been appointed as publisher of *British Journal of Hospital Medicine*, then owned by International Thomson Publishing, with the remit of establishing a medical arm. I had barely been in the job a year when Thomson decided they wanted to get out of medical publishing. So I asked if I could buy two of the journals I had been responsible for: *British Journal of Hospital Medicine* and *The Physician* and in 1985 I set up my own company.

At that time I knew few eminent people in the medical world and, with no medical background, I lacked credibility. I barely knew Jack but I had often observed that

when this then pipe smoking Northerner spoke at editorial board meetings, everyone listened. I admired his courteous, intelligent, quizzical and direct approach. So, on something of a whim, I asked Jack if he would become editor of *British Journal of Hospital Medicine* and, at the same time, become a board director of my fledgling company. To my surprise and delight he accepted.

This proved to be one of the best decisions of my life. With Jack's support, my company quickly prospered. Soon our professional relationship blossomed into a deep friendship. I owe so much to Jack. Without his support at such a crucial time, I doubt whether my company would have succeeded in the way it has.

Jack was inspirational as the Editor and then Editor-in-Chief of *British Journal of Hospital Medicine*. The stature of the journal grew demonstrably and so did our readership. We started to launch a series of highly successful national and international conferences on a range of therapeutic areas. Jack's great skill was that, not only did he possess an almost encyclopaedic knowledge of medicine, but he also had quite extraordinary prowess as an enabler and networker. He seemed to know everyone. Because he was so widely liked and respected, doctors have barely

refused an opportunity to write for our publication and Jack could always count on the loyalty of an eminent editorial board. Within my company, Jack was always extraordinarily solicitous, at times counselling members of staff and putting them in touch with a specialist doctor, if medical problems arose.

Like me, Jack caught the running bug in the late 1980s and early 1990s and we ran several marathons and half-marathons together. During this time, we would train on a Sunday in Richmond Park. We would set off shortly after dawn and return two-and-a-half hours later. For me this was a golden period of commitment and friendship with Jack and his widow Maureen.

Jack Tinker was a great doctor, a devoted family man, a wonderful companion and a loyal friend. He, more than anyone, helped to put *British Journal of Hospital Medicine* on the map. His loss will be incalculable. He was an inspired choice as Editor, and subsequently, Editor-in-Chief of *British Journal of Hospital Medicine*, positions he has held for the past 25 years. I valued him enormously for his professional contribution but, above all, as a friend.

* This is a part of the address that Mark Allen gave at Dr Tinker's funeral service.