

OBITUARY



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**Dr Anne Curtis Turner
1939–2006**

**Family Planning Doctor
in Bath 1964–1997**

Anne Turner chose to die on the day before her 67th birthday. She travelled to Zurich with her three children and with the help of the group Dignitas, committed suicide. She was suffering from progressive supranuclear palsy and did not want to become totally incapacitated by her illness. Her husband had multiple system atrophy and became increasingly disabled over the 5 years before his death in 2002.

Anne was born in Harrogate, the second daughter of a civil servant. At the age of 18 months she was evacuated to Canada with her sister and grandmother. She spent five very happy years there and returned to an austere, rationed and restricted life with parents she did not know. She enjoyed boarding school, was deputy head girl and head of sport, and left with three 'A' levels at the age of 17. Even then she was recognised as having a social conscience and being deeply concerned about the well-being of people and the world around her. To fill the year before starting her studies at St Thomas's Hospital in London, she attended Croydon Polytechnic to convert her 'A' level biology to botany and zoology. She admitted later that she often skipped classes to see the latest film at the local cinema. On her first day at medical school she met her future husband John (Jack) Turner. They married 3 weeks after graduating in 1962.

They both did a variety of jobs in the south of England, often only meeting up every 6 weeks when their weekends off coincided. In 1964 they moved to Bath. Anne trained as a family planning doctor with the Family Planning Association and then worked in the local clinic for a fee of five pounds per clinic, finding the work increasingly interesting with the introduction of intrauterine devices (IUDs) and the pill. She was an early contributor to the Medical Research Council pill study. She also worked at the Royal United Hospital providing post-termination and postnatal contraceptive advice. She established an IUD problems clinic and in 1971 became an Instructing Doctor. She was staunchly pragmatic in all she did, believing that any opinion should stand rational appraisal, but she also had a very caring approach to both patients and colleagues. She had understanding and insight and later became an Associate of the Institute of Psychosexual Medicine. In 1977 she established a family planning clinic in her husband's general practice. She managed to combine her professional work with family life, looking after a large house and garden and welcoming friends and neighbours into her home. She played tennis into her sixties, then took up bridge and to the end maintained her love of crosswords, flowers, botany, cats, opera, travelling and the theatre.

In the 1980s she took on the Women's Health Screening Service at the Bath Clinic where many appreciated her sympathy and compassion. She also took over the local termination of pregnancy service. Inevitably through this work she came into conflict with organisations opposed to termination of pregnancy and often wrote courageously to the local paper in support of her service.

She was an assessor for the Joint Committee on Contraception and had a great reputation as a teacher and innovator. She had a love of her specialist subject, which she managed to impart to nurses and doctors who worked and studied with her. She was often invited to lecture, and in 1991 she was appointed as the Regional Advisor in Family Planning Training for Wessex. In 1993 she was elected as a member of the Council of the National Association of Family Planning Doctors. In 1994 she became a Foundation Member of the Faculty. She persuaded doctors with an interest in reproductive medicine to set up the Bath and Wiltshire Doctors Group, affiliated to the Faculty. She was the Group's first Chairman.

It was a great sadness but not a surprise to her colleagues that in 1997 she decided to give up her profession to care for her beloved husband.

She is survived by her sister, Susan, and children, Sophie, Edward and Jessica, who remember her as an enormously supportive and unconditionally loving mother with a wicked sense of humour.

Submitted by **Catriona Reid**, MB ChB, FFFP, *Consultant in Family Planning and Reproductive Health Care and Clinical Director, Contraception and Sexual Health Service, Bath and North East Somerset Primary Care Trust, UK*