

OBITUARY

Dr Alison Bigrigg

FRCS, FRCOG, FFSRH, MBA



Alison Bigrigg, former President of the Faculty of Sexual & Reproductive Healthcare (FSRH) from 2001 to 2005, died on 10 April 2013 in Glasgow, UK aged 54 years, following a relapse of leukaemia.

Alison was born on 26 September 1958 in Cumbria, UK. She attended Kendrick School in Reading where, although she was academically gifted, she showed sporting prowess from an early age. Alison excelled in hockey and golf, and throughout her adult life developed further sporting interests including running, squash, skiing and was a qualified rugby coach.

Alison studied medicine at Southampton University, graduating in 1982, and then achieving her doctorate in 1992. She trained in general surgery and gynaecology, obtaining FRCS and MRCOG. Her first consultant post in 1992 was in Obstetrics and Gynaecology at Bristol, where she was also Senior Lecturer at Bristol University.

From an early stage in her career, Alison's drive to develop patient-centred care was apparent. As a registrar, Alison noted the delay in diagnosis and resultant distress experienced by women presenting with threatened miscarriage. She piloted a rapid-access early pregnancy assessment unit, with reductions in time to diagnosis and unnecessary admissions. She published her work in the *British Medical Journal*, leading to the rollout of this care model as the Early Pregnancy Assessment Unit.

After 2 years as a general consultant, Alison moved to Glasgow in 1994 to take up the post of Director of Family Planning. She built partnerships with National Health Service (NHS), local authority and voluntary sector agencies. Her vision of patient-centred, integrated sexual and reproductive healthcare (SRH) came to fruition in 2001 when the Sandyford Sexual Health Service opened in the city centre. Such was Alison's commitment to deliver holistic socially sensitive health care that she appointed both a Director of Inequalities and a Community Access Worker to her team, long before such notions were valued or fashionable. As Director of Sandyford until her retirement in 2011, Alison continued to drive forward the integrated

SRH model, overseeing the launch of nine Sandyford hub clinics across the Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS area, delivering the model in each locality.

Alison recognised the importance of developing high-calibre medical management in the NHS, to ensure delivery of top-quality patient care. She gained an MBA early on in her consultant career, and supported many colleagues to gain experience in medical management. In 2010, Alison was recognised as Scottish Healthcare Manager of the Year by the Institute of Healthcare Management Scotland.

Alison's strategic vision played a central role in the development of the first Scottish National Sexual Health Strategy, Respect and Responsibility, published in 2005. As Chair of the Lead Clinicians in Sexual Health, she was instrumental in ensuring that the strategy was implemented across Scotland. She recognised the value of information technology (IT) in supporting high-quality patient care, chairing the Scottish sexual health IT programme board, and achieving a web-based national sexual health record. Sexual health services throughout Scotland all now use the same electronic patient record, avoiding duplication and omission, while supporting appropriate information sharing, monitoring and research.

As Vice-President and subsequently President of the FSRH, Alison was instrumental in steering the development of the Faculty, and of our specialty. She saw Faculty membership increase greatly, and was heavily involved in the development of the subspecialty, initially as Community Gynaecology and latterly as Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare. As Training

Programme Director in West Scotland, Alison oversaw the successful training of seven subspecialists. All seven are now in consultant SRH posts, ensuring that Alison's vision and enthusiasm for patient-centred SRH care continues through the next generation. Alison was thrilled in her retirement year to see the General Medical Council recognise the new specialty of community SRH. Her last few weeks saw the appointment of the first Scottish cSRH trainees, much to her delight. Alison continued to contribute significantly to the work of the Faculty after retirement through ill-health. Last year she undertook a fundamental strategic review of the FSRH to set the scene for the next 5 years, to ensure that the Faculty is meeting the needs of the membership, and to 'future-proof' the organisation. At the time of her death, Alison's review had just been accepted by the Faculty.

Alison passionately believed that women should be able to have both a successful career and a rich family life. Alison's dedication and commitment to her family was paramount. She married James Browning, gynaecologist and medical entrepreneur, in 1987, and together both achieved highly successful careers. A shared love of travel, socialising and comedy ensured that time out together was highly enjoyable and revitalising. Their pride and joy, however, was their two children, Charlotte and Tom. They were delighted in their last weeks together to see Charlotte captain Cambridge University's women's rugby team and Tom represent Scotland at bridge – Alison's skills in sport and strategy shining through respectively.

Alison's enthusiasm for life and her unfailingly positive attitude continued after her diagnosis of leukaemia, and subsequent chemotherapy and bone marrow transplant. In her last year of life she celebrated 25 years of marriage to James with a big party, ran the Paris marathon, and enriched the future of our specialty with her strategic review of Faculty.

Alison is survived by husband James Browning, daughter Charlotte, son Tom, her mother Doreen, and by a progressive and forward-looking Faculty.

Submitted by **Audrey Brown**, MRCOG
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