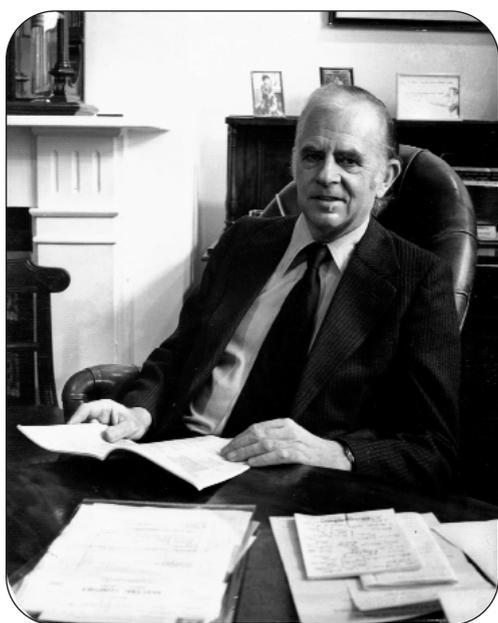


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OBITUARY

Professor Norman Morris

Professor Norman Morris, who died on 29 February 2008, will be remembered primarily as the obstetrician responsible for re-evaluating and reforming the care of women in pregnancy and labour. He was appointed Professor at Charing Cross Hospital in London in 1958. The appointment was made on the basis of his academic research, at Hammersmith and University College Hospitals, into blood pressure in pregnancy and placental transport. He retained these interests and his department made valuable contributions in these areas.

It is, however, in his humane approach to women's health for which Norman will be particularly remembered. He stated his position clearly and courageously in his address on the inauguration of his Chair. He spoke of the complacency of his obstetric colleagues who had reduced maternal and perinatal mortality dramatically, but in so doing had ignored women's feelings and emotions. This address was published in *The Lancet* in 1960 and re-published recently in that journal as one of the most influential papers of recent times. As a result of his championing, with the support of midwives and patient groups, antenatal classes became routine, husbands were encouraged to attend classes and to be with their

wives in labour, and labour wards were furnished and altered to be as welcoming as possible. The routine shave and enema on admission in labour were done away with. The role of the episiotomy was reviewed.

It was not only in the area of obstetrics that Norman's passionate concern for the well-being of women manifested itself. He addressed the problems of unwanted pregnancy and of contraception vigorously and with great empathy. His was one of the first academic departments to run specific family planning and termination clinics. These services were pioneered with the help of Geraldine Howard and Margaret Blair, and were seen as having an essential role in the department as a whole, not only for patient care but also for the training of students and doctors.

His concern for these aspects of women's health led to him writing a book on sterilisation together with his colleague Humphrey Arthure. He was interested in trying to develop a reversible method of sterilisation and devised an ingenious operation for burying the ovaries in the broad ligament. Unfortunately, in those pre-laparoscopy days, reversal required a second laparotomy.

Norman also instituted the Wyeth Symposia held annually at the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG), where the whole day was dedicated to family planning and sexual health. They were always oversubscribed and covered a broad spectrum, with speakers from all over the country. I remember when I spoke at one, being rather daunted by the almost exclusively female audience, but the atmosphere was very different from the usual RCOG meetings. The audience were warm, receptive, appreciative and enthusiastic. Norman rightly set great value by these symposia and they were a feature in the recognition of family planning and sexual health becoming a speciality in its own right.

Norman Morris was not a conventional man and his very considerable contribution was not conventional. Women's health has lost one of its greatest friends but he leaves a permanent and invaluable legacy.

The Morris family are planning a memorial service in September 2008 which Norman's professional colleagues and friends are invited to attend. Further details about this memorial service are available from Nicholas Morris (nicholashmorris@hotmail.com).

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