Obituary

J. Trevor Silverstone, FRCPsych, FRCP, FRANZCP, DM

Formerly Professor of Psychopharmacology and Psychiatry, St. Bartholomew’s Hospital (Barts), University of London

Trevor Silverstone who died on 10 January 2019 at the age of 88 years in Wellington, New Zealand, was perhaps best known for his textbook on psychopharmacology, Drug Treatment in Psychiatry. This was co-authored with his friend and colleague, the clinical pharmacologist Paul Turner (deceased, 1994), and became the standard textbook in the field in many countries. It went into five editions and was widely translated.

His main research interest in psychopharmacology was on the effect of amphetamines focused on appetite in bipolar disorder. He was innovative in his research method approaches; for example, he designed a standardised food dispenser, allowing accurate measurement of food intake over long periods. His seminal research publications were in psychological aspects of obesity, including control of appetite by medications. Trevor published widely on these and other subjects for over 35 years. His work was highly collaborative; he worked with many colleagues including John Cookson and Phil Cowen.

Trevor was born and raised in Hendon, North London. He initially went to University College School in Hampstead, but at the age of 10 he was evacuated to the USA because of the Second World War. He lived in Boston with cousins for 4 years before returning to the UK, after which he went to St. Paul’s School. Following this, he won a scholarship to Hertford College, Oxford, to read medicine. After completing his undergraduate degree, he left Oxford in 1954 for the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) on a Fulbright Scholarship to study neurophysiology with Carmen Clemente, working on the connections between the ear and the reticular formation.

Looking back, Trevor described how he spent many happy hours ‘driving around LA: up and down Sunset Boulevard (which bordered the university); to the beach where I listened to modern jazz at a place called “The Lighthouse”; and in and out of Beverly Hills’. After his time at UCLA he returned to London to obtain his medical degree at St. Bartholomew’s Hospital.

Trevor had long decided to specialize in psychiatry. After house physician and surgical appointments, and passing his MRCPsych examinations, he joined the psychiatry training programme at the Maudsley Hospital in 1961. There, he worked on the Professorial Unit under the famed (and feared) Professor Sir Aubrey Lewis, part of the time in the unit run by Dr (later Professor) Gerald Russell – an experience that I, much later, shared with him. After completing his training at the Maudsley in 1964, Trevor moved to the University of Pennsylvania to do research, working with Professor Albert (Mickey) Stunkard who was one of the global leaders in research on obesity and eating disorders. There, he worked particularly on the role of dextroamphetamine on appetite, a subject that formed the basis for his MD thesis. It was while in the USA that Trevor developed his passion for research into appetite, which was to remain with him throughout his life.

After returning to England in 1965, he was appointed Senior Lecturer in the Department of Psychological Medicine at St. Bartholomew’s Hospital, where he remained for 27 years. He was promoted to Reader in 1985, and Professor of Clinical Psychopharmacology and Head of Department in 1989. During his time at Barts, he was an active researcher, publishing over 120 peer-reviewed articles and authoring 6 books. He lectured widely all over the world, enjoying the opportunity to meet friends and colleagues in many different places.

Trevor was a highly regarded lecturer, in demand both as a speaker and chairperson of academic seminars. He was also well known for his wit and communication abilities as a moderator and raconteur. He greatly enjoyed educating junior colleagues including medical students, psychiatric trainees, PhD students and other professionals.

He retired from Barts in 1991 to move to New Zealand, where he did both research and clinical work for over a decade. He served as Clinical Director of Mental Health Services for the local District Health Board in Dunedin. In 2002 he moved to Toronto, Canada, and continued to write. He published his final book, Drugs in the Treatment of Disorders of Appetite and Body Weight, after he had retired.

For many years after retirement, Trevor was able to indulge his passions of food, art and music. However, with increasing health problems and finding the Canadian winters difficult, he and his second wife Sarah Romans returned to New Zealand in 2009. His health began to deteriorate significantly in 2014.

Trevor was married to Rosalie Ann Silverstone from 1957 until their divorce in 1989, and he married Sarah in 1995. He is survived by his wife Sarah, and by his two sons and five grandchildren from his first marriage.
References


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