

OBITUARY



**Charles Egerton Denbow, CD
BSc, DM, FRCP, FACP, FACC
September 30, 1945 – February 10, 2009**

**From The University of the West Indies, Faculty of
Medical Sciences, Mona Campus**

*Do not go gentle into that good night.
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.* Dylan Thomas
(1914 – 1953)

Charles Egerton Denbow entered the Faculty of Medicine on a Government of Guyana Scholarship in October 1965 and attained a MBBS (UWI) Honours Degree after an undergraduate career that can be described as truly legendary.

He received medals in Anatomy, Physiology, Pharmacology, Pathology and Microbiology and after the 2nd MB examinations did a BSc Special Anatomy course at St Thomas' Hospital London and gained First Class Honours; the only student at St Thomas' to achieve this high standard in that year.

On completion of his medical degree, he was assessed the best graduating student of the Class of 1971, having copped all the prizes in the clinical subjects.

He lived up to this reputation in the postgraduate years, gained the Glaxo-Allenbury (postgraduate) Fellowship in 1974 and the MRCP in 1975. He completed the DM (Medicine), UWI Degree in 1976. Dr Denbow was trained in General Internal Medicine and Cardiovascular disease at the Mayo Clinic and passed the American Boards in both specialties before returning to the University of the West Indies in 1979, joining the staff as Lecturer in Internal Medicine. He was subsequently elected Fellow of the American College of Cardiology in 1981; the first physician practicing in Jamaica to be so honoured.

Joining the Faculty of Medicine, Charles Denbow was viewed as an academic with limitless potential. His sharp intellect was equaled only by his flawless bedside manner. He also developed an outstanding reputation in teaching. Students' evaluation of his lectures, which were graded out of 5.0, turned out consistently to be 4.8 or above. Charles in his dealings with students and colleagues alike had a unique self effacing presence. This quality is not a common feature in high achievers and Rolf Richards (one of his mentors) described him as "a quiet somewhat retiring young man...soft spoken but by no means reticent".

As an academic, Charles' scholarly endeavours were centred on patient-focussed clinical cardiology. Caribbean patients with cardiac disease were his main concern. He published widely on novel cardiac techniques such as intra-coronary stent implantation, ambulatory echocardiography, balloon mitral valvuloplasty and percutaneous transluminal coronary angioplasty.

Charles Denbow was first author on most of his scholarly publications, indicating that his initiative was the major force behind his published work. He had no interest in "piggy backing" on other people's efforts. The impact of his work in modern Caribbean cardiology gave him the enviable reputation among local and international physicians as the guardian of Caribbean cardiology. This hard won reputation led to highly significant appointments from professional bodies and Medical Schools. He was appointed Visiting Professor at Morehouse School of Medicine and External Examiner at Guy's Medical School and University of Guyana. He was also appointed a Henry D McIntosh Fellow by the international organization, Heartbeat International. The Royal College of Physicians, London appointed him an International Advisor, an honour generally awarded to Senior and Distinguished Fellows of that College.

As an able administrator, Denbow served The University of the West Indies in varied capacities such as Vice Dean Clinical 1993 – 1994, Chair Faculty Sub-Committee on Graduate Studies 1993 – 1994, Head, Department of Medicine 1998 – 2004 and Chairman, Accreditation Committee, Faculty of Medical Sciences 2005 – 2007. For his scholarly endeavours and outstanding service to The University of the West Indies, Charles Denbow was elevated to the rank of Professor of Medicine in the Faculty of Medical Sciences, November 2000.

Professor Denbow's service to the University and Faculty of Medical Sciences after the year 2000 was in equal measure an act of love and courage in the face of tremendous challenges. He accepted appointment as Chairman of the Accreditation Committee in the Faculty of Medical Sciences with a zeal that was communicated to committee members and resulted in one of the most productive periods of this body. He also published on the history of cardiology in Jamaica and on medical education in the Caribbean. He also published two medical textbooks for medical students, specifically designed to make the learning of clinical medicine easy.

Professor Denbow was awarded the National Honour, Order of Distinction (Commander Class) by the Government of Jamaica in April 2008, for Service to Medicine and the Teaching of Medicine.

His life of dedication to the cardiac concerns of Caribbean people, his determination to continue serving, even in the face of daunting odds and his love for The University of the West Indies, stands out as a beacon to those left behind.

Professor Archibald McDonald
Dean, Faculty of Medical Sciences,
University of the West Indies,
Kingston 7, Jamaica, West Indies

From The Department of Medicine

Professor Charles Egerton Denbow was born in Georgetown, British Guiana (now Guyana) to Kathleen, a musician and Claude, a dental surgeon. He distinguished himself academically at Comenius Moravian School and Queen's College in British Guiana. He won the prestigious Guiana Scholarship and taught Science for a year at Queen's College. His undergraduate years at The University of the West Indies from 1966 to 1971 saw him blazing a trail of scholarship earning seven subject medals and the Clinical Medal for The Best Student. He also did an intercalated one-year BSc degree in Anatomy at St Thomas' Hospital Medical School, University of London and earned First Class Honours. He joined the DM (Internal Medicine) programme at The University of the West Indies, Mona Campus, from which he graduated in 1976. He subsequently pursued subspecialty training in Cardiology at the Mayo Clinic and also became Board certified in Internal Medicine in 1979.

For the next 30 years, he was staff at the Department of Medicine, Mona, where he moved from Lecturer, Senior Lecturer to Professor of Medicine. He was Head of the Department of Medicine from 1998 to 2004. He remained as Consultant in Internal Medicine and Cardiology at the University Hospital of the West Indies for 30 years.

His style of leadership in the Department of Medicine was novel and allowed quick resolution of academic and clinical problems. He was a superb teacher of Medicine and was well loved by his students, undergraduates and post-graduates. Many of these students practice regionally and internationally. Despite his tremendous intellect, he was never pompous or arrogant and was indeed very patient with those he worked with and cared for. He would give advice, on Departmental matters, when sought, in a very humble way but the profound wisdom of his utterances was obvious to all. He was tremendously loyal to the Department of Medicine and the University and would try always in his counsel not to cause divisiveness. His counsel was never for public broadcast. He was secure in his capabilities.

He worked as a team with many of his colleagues in Cardiology to develop the subspecialty of Cardiology at The University of the West Indies, rural Jamaica and other Caribbean islands. He helped to form the Caribbean Cardiac Society. He authored numerous publications and two books for students. The Department of Medicine is honoured to have had this stalwart of Clinical Medicine and Cardiology, this superb teacher and administrator. The Department owes a debt to his family who generously shared him with us. The Department is grateful to him and his family who agreed to the Department instituting the Professor Charles Denbow Prize for the best student in the DM (Part I) Internal Medicine Examination at Mona and for initiating the formation of the Professor Charles Denbow Foundation. He was a 'nice bright' man who endeared himself to us all and who was an apt role model for many. His light will continue to illuminate the path of many who toil in the academic and clinical vineyard.

The Staff of the Department of Medicine offers its deepest condolence to his family and friends. He fought bravely and with compassion.

Professor Everard Barton
Head, Department of Medicine
University of the West Indies
Kingston 7, Jamaica, West Indies

From The Caribbean Cardiac Society

Friend, Colleague, Doctor, Professor, Teacher, Lecturer, Researcher, Mentor, Writer, Publisher, Founder, Father, Husband, Cricket Connoisseur, Genius, humble and exemplary. These are but a few of the characteristics and roles attributed to Professor Charles Egerton Denbow over a lifetime of service.

Charlie, as he was affectionately known to all, was a truly Caribbean man. He shared his expertise not only in the clinics of Jamaica but throughout the Caribbean from Antigua to Guyana. His contribution to the advancement of

Cardiology within the Caribbean is legendary. His clear and concise appraisal of the topics at the Annual Caribbean Cardiology Conference exemplified his mastery of the art and science of Cardiology. A founder member of the Caribbean Cardiac Society, Charlie contributed to the growth of the subspecialty within the Caribbean by his research and teachings. Major contributions were made to the pioneering of Echocardiography (1981), Ambulatory Electrocardiography (1983), Exercise Testing (1984), Coronary Angiography (1994) and Interventional Cardiology (1996) in Jamaica.

CHARLES EGERTON DENBOW will always be remembered as a true UWI medical icon for his academic brilliance and quiet, confident demeanor. His significant research and many publications in peer reviewed journals has

brought a high level of respect and credibility to the UWI and his books on cardiology have provided colleagues and students with the informed guidance that is based on a deep understanding of his specialty. He will always be a household name to generations of Caribbean UWI medical students who will always remember him for his logical, clear and concise style of teaching.

The Caribbean Cardiac Society is saddened by his passing but enriched by the teachings and legacy that he has left us. May his soul rest in peace.

The Executive
The Caribbean Cardiac Society
West Indies