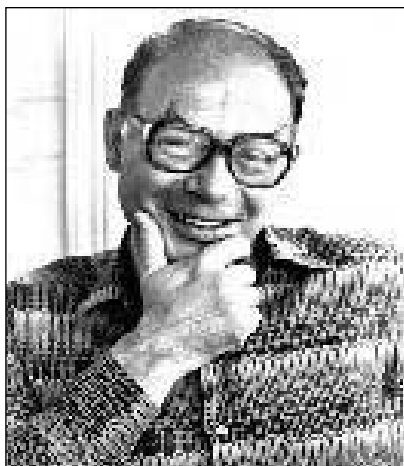


Tribute to Professor Edwin Besterman



Professor Edwin Melville Mack Besterman
May 5, 1924 – September 3, 2007

Edwin Besterman was an esteemed clinician, mentor, educator and friend. He was born in the United States of America (USA) and at 10 years of age moved to the United Kingdom (UK). He did his preclinical studies at Cambridge University graduating in 1943 with first-class honours and did his clinical training at Guy's Hospital in London.

In 1948, he had the good fortune to work with Dr Paul Wood (an icon of British cardiology) at the Hammersmith Hospital. This association lasted for 12 years. There, he was a part of the first team to do cardiac catheterization for clinical reasons. He did extensive research on rheumatic fever and gained the MA and MRCP in 1949. Among his other accomplishments were:

- Use of cardiac catheterization to demonstrate pericardial effusion in rheumatic carditis.
- First use of phenylephrine to accentuate soft cardiac murmurs.
- Designed and built a cathode ray phonocardiogram to record acute rheumatic murmurs (a first). He compiled a Cambridge MD thesis on this and was awarded the prize for the year's best thesis.
- In 1953, at the Institute of Cardiology and National Heart Hospital, he built a lipid laboratory where he studied lipoproteins and first described abnormal betalipoproteins in coronary disease.
- In 1956, he worked with cardiac surgeons at the Middlesex Hospital where they first repaired atrial septal defects using hypothermia.

For twenty-two years (1962–1984), he was a visiting cardiologist in Malta where he selected cases for cardiac surgery at St Mary's Hospital.

In 1984, he took early retirement and moved to Jamaica where he continued his academic and clinical work. He did voluntary service for 22 years at The University of the West Indies (UWI) and University Hospital of the West Indies (UHWI) and at the Heart Foundation of Jamaica (HFJ). He did research into the causes of dilated cardiomyopathy in Jamaica. He taught cardiology to both undergraduate and postgraduate students at the UWI. He did yeoman service at the weekly cardiac clinic and he ensured, by example, that letters were sent to the referring physicians. A mammoth task was the interpretation of electrocardiograms for the HFJ. In the year 2000, he published a paper on lessons learnt in the interpretation of 100 000 ECGs over a 15-year period. He was a stickler for punctuality and had phenomenal energy and excellent work ethic.

He was an academician with wide interests and was a collector of books on the history of medicine and cardiology. He published 123 papers in peer-review journals and wrote several book chapters. In 2000, he wrote a chapter on rheumatic fever in *British Cardiology in the 20th Century*.

His longstanding hobbies included medical history, gardening and photography. He was a qualified photographic judge and exhibited his own work regularly. He had a special interest in churches in the UK and archaeological sites worldwide. He won a gold medal in Jamaica for the best of 750 photograph entries at a Jamaica Cultural Development Commission competition. His new hobby was breeding German shepherd dogs. He was president of the local club in Jamaica many times and bred three champions.

Socially, he had longstanding links to Jamaica and to the UWI. His parents stayed with Sir Hugh Foot, a former governor; his son spent a year with Sir George Alleyne at UWI and he married a Jamaican (Perri) who was the chief nurse tutor at St Mary's Hospital. In 1958, he met Donald Christian, a young physician, who had come from Jamaica to London to pursue postgraduate training and their close friendship was maintained throughout the years. He spent many holidays in Jamaica and built a house in Golden Springs, St Andrew where he "retired."

He leaves wife, Perri, three sons from two previous marriages, nine grandchildren and one great granddaughter. He was predeceased by a son (a consultant physician).

In 400 BC, Socrates said "Know yourself."

In 100 BC, Cicero said "Control yourself."

In the 20th Century, Ghandi said "Give of yourself."

During his 83 years, Edwin Besterman did all of these. His legacy includes commitment, dedication and selfless service to hundreds of physicans, nurses and thousands of patients whose lives he influenced.

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