

AGENDA ITEM 1.8 OBITUARY

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR BRIAN JOHN MILLER AM FRACS GENERAL SURGEON 26 SEPTEMBER 1946 – 1 OCTOBER 2021

Brian Miller was employed by the University of Queensland in June 1988. He joined the staff at the Princess Alexandra Hospital, in the “University Unit” – one of three general surgery units in the hospital, at that time. When the PAH moved to specialist general surgery units, the following year, Brian was an inaugural member of the Colorectal Unit.

Brian was raised in Kenya and attended University in London where he graduated in 1969. He was an intern associated with Kings College working in Kent/Dulwich and London. He continued to work in the UK until the latter half of 1971 when he moved to Jamaica where he worked in Montego Bay until 1973. Following another year and a half in London he moved to Saskatoon, Canada. He became a surgical resident rotating through the programme to become a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons of Canada in 1978.



In August of 1979, he was appointed as Assistant Professor in General Surgery in the Department of Surgery, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Canada. He was a General Surgeon specialising in colonoscopy, reconstruction and Surgical Intensive care. He continued in that position until 1981 when he moved to Kenya to become the Government Provincial Surgeon, in Mombasa, Kenya. He was the solo colonoscopist for the country at that time. In 1983 he moved back to Canada to become an Associate Professor at the Department of Surgery, at the University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon where he served from 1983 to 1988. He moved to Brisbane in the middle of 1988 to continue his surgical career.

Following the establishment of the Colorectal unit at the PAH, in 1989, Brian studied for, and sat, the written and viva examinations, to complete the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons second part. He made the decision to formally sit the same exam as the local surgeons rather than try to be elected to Fellowship through more circuitous pathways. He passed the examinations and was admitted as a Fellow of the College in 1989. He then directed his passion for teaching to at all levels of medicine and surgery: undergraduate; prevocational; vocational and post fellowship, in Brisbane, Queensland and Australia. His dynamic commitment to surgical teaching has had an impact on medical students at UQ, interns and surgical registrars at PAH, and consultants and doctors in-training on EMST / ATLS courses in Australasia.

In the Discipline of Surgery at UQ he was involved in the six year undergraduate course and was an important person in the establishment of the OSCE examination used by Surgery, at that time, to assess the students. He was an integral part of the group that oversaw the transition from an undergraduate to a post Graduate course. Within the new post graduate course he supervised the teaching of year three and was the “master” of the multiple choice question bank used for assessment. The present bank is based on the bank Brian established. He has very carefully assessed and ensured the quality of the questions held in the MCQ bank. He received the Mervyn Neely Memorial award for Excellence in Surgical Teaching, twice, as voted by the student body. When he retired in 2016 he received, from UQ, a UQ Lifetime Achievement Award honouring his *“decades of service and an esteemed and talented researcher, mentor and clinician.”*

Within the Colorectal unit, at the PAH, Brian took on the role of Intern coordinator. He took the interns for regular teaching sessions, which he continued after his retirement, when he would attend a session after Surgical Grand rounds, which he continued to attend. Brian had received teaching awards in Saskatoon, for *“excellence in resident education”* three times. In 2004 he received the PA Hospital award for resident teaching with the citation *“the most consistent nominee over the preceding decade.”*

The PAH has had a rich history of involvement in surgical training. The training coordinators have been icons of surgery in Brisbane. They have included Neville Davis, Clem Windsor, George Fielding Snr, Jon Cohen and then in 2008, Brian Miller. Brian was a wonderful role model and teacher for a generation of surgeons who trained at PAH. In that role he has guided many young aspiring surgeons through the highs and lows of study examinations and clinical assessment with a focus on the individuals achieving excellence in their chosen field with the other aim of being successful in the Fellowship examination. To encourage research, and to ensure the trainees had a forum to present their work, he co-ordinated the “Tyco / Covidien / Medtronic prize for registrar presentations from 2006.

Brian had been an instructor on the Advanced Trauma Life Support Course (ATLS) in Canada. The RACS had created a committee to bring this course to Australia and New Zealand. The course in Australia was called the Early Management in Surgical Trauma (EMST) Course. Brian arrived at the perfect time, and was invited to be on the EMST committee of the RACS. He was the Course Director for the first course in Queensland and was involved with more than 40 courses over 20 years. He received the inaugural Gordon Trinca Medal, an honour awarded annually by the RACS, for “*service to trauma care and education nationally*”.

Given his association with medicine and surgery in third world countries, in his earlier years, he was drawn to outreach surgery. He developed an association with the Overseas Specialist Surgical Association of Australia. This group was based in Adelaide and lead by colleagues that Brian met through EMST. He made a significant commitment and contribution to surgery in West Timor from 2005 until 2015, when, to his disappointment, this commitment ceased due to the Indonesian government. During this time Brian’s background training had prepared him for the whole spectrum of surgery, including emergency caesarean section.

In 2012, this English, Canadian, Australian became a member in the General Division of the Order of Australia. This was awarded for “*service to medicine, to trauma education, as a mentor, through contributions to improved surgical techniques.*”

Brian found time to play acoustic guitar in a part-time band. He and his wife, Veterinary Surgeon, Rosemary, bred pedigree Bull Mastiff dogs. It was not unusual for Brian to take “paternity” leave after a litter has been born and he had to “baby sit”

Throughout his career Brian has had Rosemary by his side. They were a great couple supporting each other in their adventures and endeavours. Brian would not have been able to do half of what he has done without her support.

You could always depend upon Brian. Ask him to do something and it would be sorted very quickly. Brian did not believe you could or should put something off until tomorrow, when you can get it fixed today. Brian Miller was a gentle soul, a gentle man, and it was a privilege to have known and worked with him. Brian had a stellar career as a surgeon, teacher and role model; he made a difference.

RIP

This obituary was provided by Associate Professor Miller’s wife Rosemary and written by Dr Mark Smithers