Charles Douglas Forbes
MB, ChB, MD, DSc (Glas), FRCP (Glas, Edin, Lond), FRSE
9 October 1938 – 18 June 2017

Professor Charles Forbes, Physician, Scientist and Haematologist died on 18 June 2017 aged 78 years.

He achieved international recognition for his work on the mechanisms of blood coagulation, the complications and management of haemophilias, and the prevention and treatment of thrombosis.

Charles Douglas Forbes was born in Glasgow in 1938. He attended the High School of Glasgow and subsequently studied medicine at Glasgow University, graduating MB, ChB in 1961. After qualifying he worked at the Glasgow Royal Maternity Hospital and Stobhill Hospital, where he met his wife, Janette Robertson, who was Ward Sister in the maternity unit. He was appointed Registrar in the University Department of Medicine, Glasgow Royal Infirmary in 1964, under Professor E M McGirr. Within general medicine, he specialised in haemostasis and thrombosis, under Professor A S Douglas, a pioneer in blood coagulation research who had established the West of Scotland NHS Haemophilia Reference Centre and the University’s Haemostasis and Thrombosis Research Laboratory.

In 1965, with Professor Douglas and other colleagues, he took up a year-long secondment to new Faculty of Medicine in the University of East Africa, at the Kenyatta National Hospital in Nairobi, Kenya. His work here included pioneering research into the effects of snake venoms on blood coagulation. He moved to the USA with his family in 1968, for a period of research and training as a research scholar at the Case Western University School of Medicine in Cleveland, Ohio. Working under Professor O D Ratnoff, another pioneer in blood coagulation research, his studies of the intrinsic system of blood coagulation formed his MD thesis for the University of Glasgow. Back in Glasgow, he studied the treatment of patients with haemophilias, including the use of plasma cryoprecipitates, and of fibrinolytic inhibitor drugs for prevention of bleeding after dental extractions. He also studied the use of anticoagulant drugs (such as heparin) and antiplatelet drugs (such as aspirin) in prevention and treatment of thrombosis. He was appointed Senior Lecturer and Honorary Consultant Physician in 1974.

He formed close links with the University of Strathclyde, close by the Royal Infirmary, participating in its student health service. With its Bioengineering Unit and Professors J C Barbenel and J M Courtney, he studied the viscosity of blood, and the interactions of blood with artificial surfaces (which were important in renal dialysis, heart surgery and artificial heart valves). He organised conferences on these topics, and also on pressure sores and haemophilias, in the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow. He was also active in the College’s development of its site on St Vincent Street, and in its examinations for membership of the UK Royal Colleges of Physicians (MRCP). Over his professional lifetime, he examined more times in this examination than any other UK physician.

His researches in haemophilia focused on its profound psychosocial consequences, collaborating with Professor I Markova at the University of Stirling. In 1983 he became Co-Director of the West of Scotland Haemophilia Centre and researched the emerging problems of hepatitis and the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) in patients with haemophilias, which were subsequently shown to be due to contamination of blood products by novel viruses (HIV and hepatitis C). He became Chairman of the UK Haemophilia Centre Directors Organisation and of its AIDS subgroup, and was nationally active in monitoring HIV, education of patients, relatives and healthcare professionals, and establishing links with infectious disease specialists for joint management.

He was promoted to Reader in Medicine by the University of Glasgow, who awarded him a DSc for his collated research publications in 1985.

In 1987 he was appointed Professor of Medicine at Dundee University School of Medicine, the position he retained until he retired in 2003. His role in Dundee was varied, involving teaching and much clinical work as Honorary Consultant in Tayside University Hospitals NHS Trust, both of which he greatly enjoyed. He was a member of the Health Board; and continued to pursue his research interests in the treatment and prevention of thrombosis and cardiovascular diseases, including heart disease and stroke. He continued to edit the Scottish Medical Journal; developed the medical charity
Scottish Heart and Arterial Risk Disease Prevention (SHARP); and chaired the Chest, Heart & Stroke Scotland (CHSS) charity.

Over his career, Charles Forbes contributed to over 400 scientific papers and edited or co-edited over 20 academic medical books. The most well-known and widely successful of his books was the *Colour Atlas and Text of Clinical Medicine*, which he co-wrote with William Jackson and which was first published in 1993. As the first fully-illustrated textbook of medicine it sold many hundreds of thousands of copies around the world. It was subsequently published in second (1996) and third editions (2003) and was translated into at least 25 languages, with later editions also made available digitally. Charles was the most delightful of co-authors – always calm and measured in the face of the many complications involved in putting together such a major work. More generally, Charles was widely loved and respected as a trusted and supportive physician and colleague.

Charles retired in 2003 and enjoyed dividing his time between his family home in St Andrews and a holiday house on the west coast of Scotland. After retirement, he also spent significant amounts of time as an expert witness to the Scottish Public Inquiry into HIV and Hepatitis C infections acquired as a result of NHS treatment with blood and blood products (the Penrose Inquiry).

Charles was devoted to Janette, who died in 2014. He is survived by two sons, Donald and Stuart, and four grandchildren, Charlie, Richie, Livy and Calum.

Gordon DO Lowe
Joseph C Barbenel
William Jackson