

---

# Remembering Professor Stanley Dische

1927-2017

---



Prof Stanley Dische, one of the great pioneers of modern radiotherapy, sadly died on 2nd November 2017 at the age of 90 years. Stanley Dische was born in London on 27th March 1927 and qualified in medicine from the Middlesex Hospital Medical School, London, in 1950. He worked initially as an Assistant Pathologist in the Bland Sutton Institute of Pathology at the Middlesex Hospital and subsequently as Pathologist to the Royal Air Force Institute of Pathology and Tropical Medicine. During this time he completed his research for his MD thesis entitled 'The investigation of symptomless glycosuria'. He entered training in radiotherapy in May 1955 at the Middlesex Hospital, later working in Manitoba, Canada between 1958 and 1959 and subsequently in Philadelphia between 1959 and 1962, where he was Assistant Professor in Radiation Therapy and Isotopes at the Jefferson Medical College.

In August 1962 he was appointed Senior Assistant to the Meyerstein Institute of Radiotherapy at the Middlesex Hospital where he remained until August 1965, when he took up his substantive post

at Mount Vernon as Consultant Radiotherapist and Oncologist. There he developed a very large clinical practice serving district general hospitals across Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire, continuing in this post until September 1992. He served as Clinical Director for the Mount Vernon Cancer Treatment Centre between October 1985 and September 1992, when under his leadership the Centre became an international leader in clinical cancer research and the largest cancer treatment centre in southern England.

Alongside a daunting clinical and administrative workload Stanley Dische was at the forefront of research into the mechanisms of radiation therapy in cancer treatment. Working alongside scientists in the Gray Laboratory at Mount Vernon he established relationships which led to one of the most successful translational research groups in modern radiotherapy. He pioneered the clinical evaluation of hyperbaric oxygen and hypoxic radiosensitisers through the 1970s and 1980s. Subsequently working with Jack Fowler and others at the Gray Laboratory, he and his wife Michele

Saunders developed the accelerated radiotherapy schedule CHART. They pioneered this novel fractionation schedule in the clinical setting ultimately delivering two large randomised trials, one of which showed the largest survival advantage in lung cancer ever demonstrated following radiation treatment. During this time he published over 200 peer-reviewed publications and 40 book chapters.

In recognition of his exceptional research contributions, Stanley Dische was appointed a Life Fellow of the Cancer Research Campaign in 1988 and to Visiting Chair in Oncology in University College, London. He acquired international acclaim evidenced by invitations to lecture across the world and numerous awards including the Regaud Medal of the European Society of Therapeutic Radiation Oncology, the Roentgen Prize of the British Institute for Radiology, the Swedish Ellis Bervan medal and the Lennon award of the South African Society for Radiation Therapy. In 1994 he was elected an Honorary Fellow of the American College of Radiologists.

After retiring from full-time clinical practice in 1992 he continued as an active member of the Mount Vernon Cancer Treatment Centre, offering advice and wisdom to younger colleagues and maintaining his clinics for late effects in CHART patients. He became Director of Research and Development for the Mount Vernon Hospital and founder member and subsequently chairman of the board of the Gray Laboratory Cancer Re-

search Trust. It was with great sadness and frustration that he witnessed the closure of the Gray Laboratory in Northwood.

He and his wife Michele Saunders were a devoted couple sharing many research interests and clinical activities. In his retirement he enjoyed art and sculpture being proficient at both and together they spent many happy hours in Somerset where they had a converted mill.

Stanley Dische will be remembered as a respected and valued teacher who trained generations of oncologists who have benefited from his wisdom and clarity over the years. *“Stan was my first boss when I entered the Middx Hosp registrar rotation in October 1974. I was so impressed by the high level of organisation at MVH, including detailed written protocols governing all aspects of patient care and tumour sites. Strict adherence was insisted upon, but policies could be questioned and the atmosphere was never severe. His modesty was a noticeable characteristic, a rare quality that distinguished him”*, remembers Prof John Yarnold. He was a man of great integrity who attained the highest levels of achievement in clinical practice, research and teaching during his career.

*Peter Hoskin  
Northwood Middlesex  
UK*

---