

# Obituary

## Dr James Willis, BA, FRCPsych, FRCPE



Dr James (Jim) Willis was a well-known Guy's Hospital psychiatrist who, in the 1960s, was much involved in the National Health Service (NHS) treatment of those dependent on heroin and cocaine and other non-therapeutic and socially unacceptable drugs. He wrote widely on psychiatric topics and, later in his life, novels.

Jim Willis was born in Dublin in 1928: following education at Stonyhurst School and 2 years National Service, he started his medical education at Guy's Hospital Medical School where, as well as his medical studies, he was well remembered for his involvement in the hospital's Christmas shows and similar activities. After qualifying as a doctor, and with 2 years general medical and surgical training at Guy's, he had become a member of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh and later became a Fellow of both that College and the Royal College of Psychiatrists. He had decided to train as a psychiatrist, having been impressed by the work of David Stafford Clark. He worked in training posts at Guy's, Warlingham Park, the Maudsley and the Institute of Psychiatry. He became a consultant at Stone House Hospital and Warlingham Park Hospital before being recalled to Guy's to develop their drug dependence treatment services over the

next 10 years. He was remembered fondly by many of his patients at this time for his liberal and non-judgemental views when many saw addicts as moral lepers. In 1969/1970 he was Director of Education at the Pilgrim State Hospital, New York, and, in 1982 Visiting Professor of Neurosciences at Johns Hopkins medical school. He also worked for the World Health Organization at intervals, including being European Regional Consultant in 1973.

He first retired from the NHS in 1976 when he decided to return to general psychiatry. He was appointed head of psychiatry at King Faisal Specialist Hospital in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, where he worked for the next decade. He remained in Saudi Arabia until the death of his first wife (Muriel). He then returned to the NHS to a drug dependence treatment unit in Liverpool in 1985 but had to retire in 1987, for a second and final time, because of illness.

In 1964 his first book *Lecture Notes in Psychiatry* was published. It ran to seven editions during his editorship and was translated into Arabic, Portuguese and a pirated version in Farsi. He wrote five books on psychiatric topics and 45 publications in all, mostly dealing with drug dependence. After his retirement, he found the time to write five novels which enjoyed modest success. He is survived by his second wife (June), his son, daughter and three grandchildren. He often said that he would wish to be remembered as someone who had tried to do this best for his patients, and this is the way he will be remembered.

**Thomas Bewley**

doi: 10.1192/pb.bp.112.040972