

## Obituary

Professor Christopher Pennington  
(1946–2002)



Chris Pennington was the only son of a Welsh Methodist minister and grew up in Wales and the West Country. He studied medicine at the University of Manchester, graduating in 1970, achieving his MRCP (UK) in 1972 and an MD in 1977. He became a FRCP (Edinburgh) in 1983 and was elected a FRCP (London) in 1993.

His early career encompassed junior jobs in Manchester, Dundee and Aberdeen. He returned to Dundee in 1979 to become a Consultant Physician and Gastroenterologist. He became Professor of Medicine in 1998.

During a very active career he held many different posts, including Clinical Group Director for Medicine in the Tayside University Hospitals Trust. He did this extremely well during a period of great organisational change, being feared by a few, loved by many and respected by all. He was also a long-time member of the British Society of Gastro-

enterology and of the Nutrition Society. Most recently, he served as Chairman of the Clinical Nutrition and Metabolism Group (CNMG) and of the British Association of Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition (BAPEN).

Chris's professional interests were wide ranging, and included the management of inflammatory bowel disease and of disease-related malnutrition and the use of artificial nutritional support. Most recently, he was key in establishing the Managed Clinical Network for patients on home parenteral nutrition in Scotland. He published extensively in all these areas and contributed to several seminal textbooks. Despite his wide research interests he focused increasingly on small bowel ecology and on disease-related malnutrition in the elderly. A talented teacher and lecturer, he was a widely sought-after guest speaker whose presentations epitomised clarity and comprehensibility. Although highly

critical of his own abilities, he revelled in sharing information and he had particular skills in encouraging all others to contribute to a discussion. He was always strictly fair in assessing the work of others, and when he felt the work was good he gave encouragement and promoted the work himself. He was always polite and defused many a conflict. He demanded a great deal from his colleagues, but far less than he was prepared to contribute himself. He valued all equally, regardless of status and, despite his significant achievements, he retained a fundamental humility, an unshakeable belief in the truth and an inquisitive mind with a sense of humour. These qualities generated enormous respect and admiration from everyone who had the good fortune to work with him.

Outside work, Chris and his wife enjoyed good holidays, most particularly the time they spent in Africa. He played tennis vigorously at local club level and had an extensive knowledge of steam engines. The last few months of his illness were lightened by his interest in photography and his passion for listening to classical music.

#### **Professor Chris Pennington and the Clinical Nutrition and Metabolism Group of the Nutrition Society**

Chris Pennington was an active member of CNMG, of which he was Chairman for several years. His scientific and clinical interest in the provision of clinical nutrition and in particular of parenteral nutrition was valuable to the activities of CNMG and the Nutrition Society. He took part in many new teaching initiatives including running courses and workshops. In 2000 Chris became the Chairman of BAPEN. His contributions to CNMG and BAPEN were consistent and significant. It came, then, as no surprise when he was asked to take responsibility for organising the 2002 ESPEN Congress in Glasgow. He threw himself wholeheartedly into this enormous task, thereby gaining respect and admiration from his new European colleagues as well as those with whom he had been working previously. He

described the objectives for the Congress and single-mindedly pursued them. The success of the meeting is in large part due to him.

Multi-professional working was second nature to Chris and he constantly supported the non-medical professions in their quest to have their expertise equally acknowledged in the field of clinical nutrition. His input ranged from guest lectures and teaching sessions to advising on potential publications, supporting multi-professional research projects and acting as a mentor whenever necessary. He was frequently invited to lecture at several of the Royal Colleges and he was able to share the work that was started within CNMG and BAPEN. This was a source of pride to him and he never failed to publicise clinical nutrition whenever an opportunity arose.

Not surprisingly, his main focus was always 'the patient' and his clinical practice reflected this. There were many occasions when he reminded us that high-powered research activity or organisational restructuring must result in improved patient care. He always worked closely with patients and stood firm in his belief that they have the right to a voice which needs to be considered throughout the decision making process.

Without doubt, Chris Pennington's greatest contribution to the Nutrition Society was as Chairman of CNMG. He was always supportive of the scientific activities of CNMG and of its fruitful relationship with BAPEN. Over the years he promoted research and science related to clinical nutrition, and he always valued the contribution of CNMG in the BAPEN annual meeting. Those of us who were in Harrogate for the 2001 Annual Meeting were well aware of his pride in the success of the scientific component of the meeting.

CNMG, and indeed the whole field of clinical nutrition, has lost a leader with vision, a colleague with compassion, a mentor with time and a friend who cared. He will be greatly missed and our sympathy is extended to his wife, Jane, and his daughter Susan.

The CNMG Committee