

Obituary

Paul A. J. Speth, M.D.



Paul Speth died suddenly at the age of 38 on Sunday 11th December 1988. He collapsed while taking a regular jog with his friends. Just a few days later he was to have given a presentation on Flow Cytometry in Pharmacokinetics and Metabolism to his other friends and colleagues in the EORTC Pharmacokinetics and Metabolism Group at our Tenth Anniversary Meeting in Jesus College, Cambridge. The news of his savagely premature death was received with great sadness at the loss of a good friend, doctor and scientist.

Paul trained as a medical student in Nijmegen, working for some time in the USA and Tanzania, before graduating in Medicine in 1977. He then went on to train as an internist. He described his early medical experiences in a book written under the pseudonym of Arnold Weterings.

Paul completed his education in the Haematology Department at the St Radboud University Hospital, Nijmegen, specializing in studies of the Cellular Pharmacokinetics and Pharmacodynamics of Anthracyclines in Man, the title of his thesis which I frequently take down from my shelf to consult. He is perhaps most well known for his careful and innovative application of flow cytometry and HPLC to investigate the cellular disposition of anthracyclines in haematological malignancies.

After obtaining his doctorate in 1986 he obtained an EORTC-NCI Fellowship to work with Dr. Jerry Collins at the Pharmacology Branch of the U.S. National Cancer Institute, Bethesda. Here he continued to exploit the powerful technique of flow cytometry, particularly as part of the clinical development of iododeoxyuridine (IdUrd). He carried out a typically careful analysis of the extent of IdUrd incorporation into the DNA of *in vitro* tumour cells as measured by flow cytometry using the fluorescent bromodeoxyuridine antibody, and validated the methodology by direct HPLC determination. In clinical studies of cytotoxicity and radiosensitization, he demonstrated extensive incorporation of IdUrd into the DNA of human liver tumours (in contrast to normal cells), allowing cell kinetic calculations to be performed.

Having made an outstanding impression on his colleagues at NCI, Paul returned to the Division of Oncology in Nijmegen in 1988, bringing with him the benefit of his experience in the USA. Just a few weeks before his death Paul was appointed to the Editorial Board of the European Journal of Cancer and Clinical Oncology.

Paul was for many years a keen and active member of the EORTC PAM Group, participating eagerly in clinical and experimental projects. He was a senior author with several PAM colleagues of a paper on Phase I and pharmacokinetic studies with mitomycin. At the Joint Groups Meeting in Edinburgh in 1987 he acted as unofficial photographer at the football match, catching several eminent oncologists in most undignified positions.

Paul Speth was not only a kind and hardworking doctor and scientist, highly regarded by friends and colleagues both at home and abroad, but also a family man who leaves a wife, Agnes, and children Daan and Marijn. We shall all miss him.

Paul Workman
Chairman, EORTC Pharmacokinetics
and Metabolism Group
MRC Centre
Cambridge CB 2 2QH, UK