


OBITUARY



Obituary: Professor Graham Ramsay

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Graham Ramsay, President of the European Society from 2004 to 2006, died in hospital in Buxton, Derbyshire on September 6th 2018, following a long illness.

Graham was born on May 28th 1955 to parents David and Eileen. He and his younger sister Beverley grew up in Kirkcaldy. Graham was the first in his family to obtain a university degree, studying medicine in Dundee. Following qualification he chose surgery as his speciality, training in Glasgow. He married Claire, then a nurse, and they had one daughter, Ashley, in 1986.

While at the Western Infirmary, in 1985 Graham was appointed as one of three research fellows to the Shock Team under the tutelage of Professor Iain Ledingham. This well-established and innovative group combined research training in emergency and intensive care medicine with service provision of critical care secondary retrievals from hospitals across the West of Scotland to

the specialised intensive care unit at the Western Infirmary. The experience gained was unique in the UK, encouraging a multidisciplinary approach to patient care and outstanding training in research methodology, from animal laboratory research to health services and systems. The three research fellows were responsible for conducting all aspects of retrievals including driving the specially equipped ambulance, a novel experience for those who had only recently acquired a driving licence. Graham's research focused on animal models of ischaemia–reperfusion and surgical infection, a theme which he subsequently expanded into a study of selective digestive decontamination.

It was during this period with Iain Ledingham and the Shock Team that Graham started to consider intensive care medicine (ICM) as a career choice. He was appointed to a specialist post as Senior Lecturer in Surgery at the Western, but finally decided to make ICM his primary speciality. This was a brave decision at the time: other than his mentor, there were no surgical role models in intensive care in the UK.

In 1993 Graham accepted an offer to become Professor and Chief of Intensive Care in the University Hospital in Maastricht, Netherlands. In addition to developing clinical research, his aim was to encourage a multidisciplinary approach to the care of critically ill patients, and he worked tirelessly to bring together the various subspecialty ICUs to offer common training and shared clinical protocols. In 2003 he became hospital director, recognising the importance to patient care of good managerial skills and senior leadership.

In 2004 Graham was elected President of the European Society of Intensive Care Medicine, having previously been Head of the Division of Professional Development. He set up a collaboration with the University of Dundee to bring to intensive care medicine the work they had done on developing distance learning programmes. Iain Ledingham was appointed Editor-in-Chief for the first year, supported by an international editorial board and

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numerous contributors. He was succeeded by Graham as the project progressed to become Patient Centred Acute Care Training (PACT), now well-embedded in the Society's numerous offerings to its members. Graham was also instrumental in setting up the Surviving Sepsis Campaign with Phil Dellinger and Mitchell Levy representing the International Sepsis Forum and the Society of Critical Care Medicine. Graham's skills in developing a complex professional network, and in managing relationships with industrial partners were essential components in creating this important quality improvement initiative which has grown to involve numerous professional societies worldwide, with best practice sepsis standards reviewed every 2 years. Graham also promoted the interests of developing countries, providing opportunities for interaction with colleagues in less well-funded healthcare systems.

Graham's marriage to Claire did not survive, and they separated in 2002. Graham subsequently formed a close relationship with Dr. Francesca Rubulotta. In 2006 Graham returned to the UK as Medical Director and then Deputy Chief Executive at West Hertfordshire Trust and then moving to mid Essex Hospital services NHS Trust in Chelmsford, becoming Chief Executive in 2009. He oversaw the reorganisation of local health services to a centralised acute hospital, achieving Foundation status in the process. However, the pressures of holding a senior management role in the NHS at a time of increasing financial

constraints started to impact adversely on his health, and in 2011 he decided to resign from this post. In 2012 he moved to Buxton in Derbyshire, becoming non-executive director at Chesterfield Royal Hospital until 2014 when he retired because of ill health. He was able to attend his daughter Ashley's wedding in 2015, but in September 2018 was admitted to hospital following a fall, sustaining a head injury from which he did not recover. He died peacefully with Ashley at his bedside.

What of the man? Graham was an inspirational leader, a skilled surgeon, a compassionate clinician, an incisive manager, and a most generous friend. Intolerant of obstructive bureaucracy, he was firmly focused on what mattered—better patient care. He transformed the lives of his patients and acted as an important role model to junior colleagues. His Scottish demeanour was soon penetrated to reveal a warm sense of humour. His is remembered with affection and respect by all those who knew him; and by his friends and family with great love.

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