



# History and philosophy of the treatment of rheumatic diseases

K. D. Rainsford<sup>1</sup> · Walter Fairbairn Kean<sup>2</sup> · Colin Andrew Kean<sup>2</sup>

Received: 16 March 2023 / Accepted: 27 March 2023 / Published online: 17 May 2023  
© The Author(s), under exclusive licence to Springer Nature Switzerland AG 2023

These Collectives of articles are based on a series of manuscripts that were mostly hand written by the late Professor William Watson Buchanan, who very sadly passed away on 28th January 2006 (Rainsford 2006). These papers were his last and mostly as handwritten texts were incomplete. After discussions with his wife, Margaret, and daughter, Helen Abrams (née Buchanan), it was considered an important legacy to arrange publication of these in article form. Thus, in a sense, it fell upon us to act as editors and to compile these papers. We also had an offer of a chapter on Sjögren's disease from one of Watson's close colleagues, Dr Geza Balint, Budapest, Hungary. We have pleasure in including and contributing to this article in recognition of the common interests that Watson and Dr Balint had in this condition.

We regard the preparation and editing of these articles as a most honourable and challenging task. We consider it a great honour in the memory of our close colleague and friend who was a most remarkable physician, scientist and academic rheumatologist.

Watson Buchanan led the world in the understanding of the causes and the treatment of rheumatic diseases. His extensive knowledge of these complex conditions with the inevitable involvement of the physiology and pathology of virtually all major organ systems was world class. He also had the great skill and kindness of being an immensely knowledgeable and caring physician. This was recognised in the award of the Cullen Prize of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh a short while before his untimely death;

the Cullen Prize being, in part, recognition of outstanding care of patients.

As an immensely broad-based academic, Watson had a long-standing interest in the history of medicine, especially the rheumatic diseases. In particular, his knowledge and publications on many aspects of Scottish medical history has been legend. He was a fluent Gaelic speaker and also wrote in Gaelic. This equipped him to read and write in the language of early medical history of the Scottish peoples that also involved their neighbours including those of Viking, Scandinavian and Irish origins.

The first Collective group of articles brings together papers on the historical and philosophical aspects of the individual groups of the rheumatic diseases, focused on those conditions that Watson regarded as being of prominence and importance to medicine. In the original form, they may have been somewhat incomplete, but we have added many key points and references where we consider it important to provide essential details.

The last articles in a further collective, comprise the history of three notable essays on some observers with Scottish interests who in their own way give some insight into the early medical history in Scotland. The observations made by Watson in these sections are remarkable and important in understanding health of the peoples of those times, the harsh conditions they experienced, and yet the remarkable care they were given by leading physicians of the time.

We dedicate these articles to the many patients, colleagues, family and friends who knew and undoubtedly appreciated his immense humanity, patient care and contributions in the understanding and treatment of rheumatic, painful and chronic diseases.

---

This article is belongs to "Special issue: History & Philosophy of the Treatment of Rheumatic Diseases and their Therapy".

---

✉ Walter Fairbairn Kean  
wfkean@gmail.com

K. D. Rainsford  
k.d.rainsford@shu.ac.uk

<sup>1</sup> Biomedical Sciences, Biomedical Research Centre, Department of Biosciences & Chemistry, Sheffield Hallam University, Howard Street, Sheffield, England S1 1WB, UK

<sup>2</sup> Hamilton, Canada

**Funding** No Funding was recieved for this article.

## Declarations

**Conflict of interest** All authors have no competing interests.

## Reference

Rainsford KD (2006) Professor William Watson Buchanan, MB ChB, MD, FRCP (Glas., Edin., C), FRACP, FRCP (Hon; Ireland), FACR (Hon) (4.7.1930–28.1.2006). *Inflammopharmacology* 14(3–4):103–119

**Publisher's Note** Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.