Obituary

Obituary: A Remembrance of Gordon Andrew Hunter (1937–2015)

Anthony Calabro MA

Gordon Andrew Hunter MB, FRCS, FRCS(C), long-time member of The Association of Bone and Joint Surgeons®, passed away on June 11, 2015 at the age of 78.

A renowned orthopaedic surgeon and educator, Dr. Hunter (Fig. 1) established himself as a leader in hip and knee trauma, foot and ankle surgery, and orthotics and prosthetics care during his 30-plus year career.

Born in London, England, Dr. Hunter began his medical career at the University College of London in 1960. His postgraduate training included appointments at the Birmingham Accident Hospital, the University

Fig. 1 As an educator, Dr. Hunter was a straight-shooter with an uncanny ability to make his students smile. (Published with permission from Gini Hunter).

flowed from England to Toronto in the early 1970s.

“Although they were well-trained, surgeons had a difficult time securing long-term jobs in the late 1960s and early 1970s in the United Kingdom,” Marvin Tile MD, FRCS(C), former Chief of Surgery at SBHSC, said. “Toronto was a beneficiary. We had a good number of UK ex-pats in the orthopaedic specialties. It was quite the community. Chief among them was Gordon.”

Dr. Hunter and his family moved into their home in Lawrence Park, Toronto—where they would eventually stay for 44 years. Merely two blocks from his offices at SBHSC, Dr. Hunter often walked to work.

“He was extremely dedicated to his job,” Dr. Tile said. “I worked with Gordon for 30 years. We had an open-door policy. I’d walk through his doors, he’d walk through mine. He just loved what he was doing.”

Dr. Hunter became a Professor in the Department of Surgery, at the University of Toronto in 1986, gaining Professor Emeritus status in 2002. He lectured nationally and internationally on various orthopaedic topics, primarily trauma, hip and knee replacements, foot and ankle problems, and amputation.

The author certifies that he, or any members of his immediate family, has no commercial associations (eg, consultancies, stock ownership, equity interest, patent/licensing arrangements, etc) that might pose a conflict of interest in connection with the submitted article.

The opinions expressed are those of the writers, and do not reflect the opinion or policy of CORR® or The Association of Bone and Joint Surgeons®.

A. Calabro MA (✉)
Clinical Orthopaedics and Related
Research®, 1600 Spruce Street,
Philadelphia, PA 19013, USA
e-mail: acalabro@clinorthop.org

College Hospital in England, and the University of the West Indies in Jamaica. In England, Gordon won numerous awards including the Gold Medal in Medicine for his work at the University College of London and the Begley Prize in Surgery for his work at the Royal College of Surgeons of England.

In 1969, he moved to Toronto, Canada joining the Sunnybrook Health Sciences Center (SBHSC) as a Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon. Dr. Hunter was part of a pipeline that

Obituary

As an educator, Dr. Hunter was a straight-shooter with an uncanny ability to make his students smile, noted former resident James Powell MD.

“He was always teaching, but there was always a laugh or two at the end of our conversations,” Dr. Powell said.

An early and active member of The Hip Society, Dr. Hunter wrote numerous papers on dislocated hips, including a study on the natural history of a patient with an infected total hip replacement [2] and a paper outlining the limitations associated with revision THA [1]. The Hip Society awarded Gordon with the Otto Aufranc Award for outstanding research in 1976.

“His work on dislocated hips is still relevant today,” Dr. Tile said.

That same year, SBHSC established Canada’s first regional trauma unit. During this time, Dr. Hunter gravitated toward caring for patients with life-threatening injuries, specifically those resulting in amputation. He developed a worldwide reputation for his work at the trauma unit and in the prosthetics division at SBHSC.

“Gordon loved providing trauma care,” Dr. Powell said. “He gave everything to that unit. Even though it is not the most glamorous position, he took on the role of an amputation surgeon. Some surgeons see amputation as a sign of defeat or failure. Gordon never viewed amputations that way. He studied amputations scientifically.”

Along with his talks and numerous papers on the subject [3, 4], Dr. Hunter worked with allied healthcare personnel to help provide services to veterans with amputations and trauma patients who required amputations.

“His body of work is simply extraordinary,” Dr. Powell said. “He was highly regarded in the orthotics and prosthetics world.”

A pragmatic thinker, Dr. Powell noted that if Dr. Hunter had not been an orthopaedic surgeon, he likely would have become a judge. In fact, after his retirement in 2002, Dr. Hunter worked part-time as a medicolegal consultant at Canadian Trauma Consultants until 2013.

Outside of work, friends and colleagues knew Dr. Hunter as a quiet man, but one who loved good conversation. His dry sense of humor was legendary among his friends and colleagues. As he grew older, Dr. Hunter took to watching cricket and rugby—perhaps with a pint or two of beer.

“When I first moved to Toronto, Gordon invited me to come watch rugby at the local sports pub on Saturday mornings,” Dr. David Stephen, Medical Director of Orthopaedic Trauma at SBHSC said. “I missed the first few times because of work, but once I found out they were serving beer at 9 AM on a Saturday, my goal was to meet him there as often as I could.”

Ever the outdoorsman, Dr. Hunter enjoyed tennis, sailing, and swimming (Fig. 2). But above all else, Dr. Hunter loved spending time with his family and his cherished dog, Benji. He was very much at home in the countryside and spent many happy times with his children and grandchildren on both sides of the Atlantic and, more recently, on both sides of Canada, according to his wife of 50 years, Virginia (Gini). Although he lived a full life in Toronto, Dr. Hunter always remained an Englishman, frequently visiting his home county of Suffolk.

Dr. Hunter leaves his beloved wife Gini, his daughter Carolyn (Nigel Kirkwood), and son Jonathan (Nita). He was a cherished Grandfather (Papa) to Thomas and Emma Kirkwood in

Fig. 2 Ever the outdoorsman, Dr. Hunter enjoyed tennis, sailing, and swimming. (Published with permission from Gini Hunter).

Obituary

Vancouver, Canada and (Ampa) to Alexandra, Campbell, and Sophie Hunter in Toronto. In Australia and New Zealand, Gordon will be sadly missed by his nephews, niece, and sisters-in-law: Andrew, David, Robert (Fred), Sally, Sue, and Jean.

Dr. Hunter was predeceased by his parents and his brother, Dr. Ian Anthony Hunter.

References

1. Cameron HU, Hunter GA. Failure in total knee arthroplasty: Mechanisms, revisions, and results. *Clin Orthop Relat Res.* 1982;170:141–146.
2. Hunter G, Dandy D. The natural history of the patient with an infected total hip replacement. *J Bone Joint Surg Br.* 1977;59:293–297.
3. Millstein SG, McCowan SA, Hunter GA. Traumatic partial foot amputations in adults. A long-term review. *J Bone Joint Surg Br.* 1988;70:251–254.
4. Wood MR, Hunter GA, Millstein SG. The value of revision surgery after initial amputation of an upper or lower limb. *Prosthet Orthot Int.* 1987;11:17–20.