

Professor Archibald ‘John’ Campbell



Professor John Campbell died at Dunedin on August 22 at the age of 70. He was widely respected for his leadership and academic contributions as The Dean of the Faculty of Medicine at Otago and as an internationally recognised researcher, his chairmanship of the Medical Council of New Zealand and his outstanding clinical skills in geriatrics. He died from complications related to fronto-temporal, early onset dementia, a diagnosis which was both tragic and ironic.

Professor Campbell was raised in Auckland and he graduated MBChB at Otago in 1969, and subsequently achieved FRACP, FRCP and MD (University of Otago). He undertook post-graduate study in Canada and the UK, then returning to Cook Hospital in Gisborne in 1977 as a general physician and geriatrician. He made a

move to Wakari Hospital in Dunedin in 1980 as a joint appointee to the University of Otago and the Otago Hospital Board. His influence resulted in the Wakari Geriatric Unit becoming a leader in geriatric care in New Zealand. However, his contribution as a clinician was most evident at the bedside. Professor Campbell was always interested in the person behind the illness, and he knew how to make the patient feel valued and important. His attention to the care of the whole individual, regardless of their status in life or prognosis, gave him the greatest pleasure. He was also a razor-sharp diagnostician and analytical physician. Professor Campbell enjoyed the stimulus of undergraduate and postgraduate students, and he is remembered fondly by innumerable students for his generosity, interest and inspirational teaching. He was always

prepared to assist students who were struggling, and he went well beyond the usual limits to encourage and help.

Professor Campbell was an academic from top to toe. He was awarded a Chair in Geriatric Medicine in 1984 at an early stage of his career. He was appointed Chair of the Medicine Department in Dunedin in 1988 and then progressed to Dean, Faculty of Medicine in 1995, holding the post until 2005. He took a particular interest in the undergraduate curriculum, and promoted the learning of medicine around the patient and their clinical problems. Progress was made, but not as quickly as Professor Campbell's vision had projected. His vision is still driving forward movement in the Otago curriculum. He was a member of the Australian Medical Council Accreditation Committee, and contributed to many reviews of Australasian medical schools, frequently acting as Chair of the review panel.

His contribution to research in geriatric medicine was far reaching. He published in excess of 100 refereed journal articles, which predominantly related to the epidemiology of illness in old age, with particular emphasis on factors contributing to falls and strategies for preventing these. Professor Campbell and his collaborators published seminal works on falls prevention, and the Otago Exercise Programme has become the flagship model for prevention of falls in many countries. Given the severe morbidity resulting from falls, and in particular hip fractures, this programme will be one of Professor Campbell's enduring testaments.

Professor Campbell was Chair of the Medical Council of New Zealand from 2003 to 2009. This period represented challenging times for the profession in terms of changes embodied in the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act, 2003. Professor

Campbell's clear view of the future shape of medicine guided the Council through implementation of these changes. He was appointed inaugural Chair of the Expert Panel on Veterans' Health in 2009. This led to his appointment as an expert geriatrician to the Courts of Cambodia during the war crimes trials of senior Khmer Rouge leaders. He served as an advisor to WHO between 1979 and 1995, and authored a number of technical reports for WHO meetings. He also served on many national advisory bodies addressing health services for the elderly, and was a member of many international editorial boards.

Although medicine was a major component of Professor Campbell's life, there was always time for family and other activities. Wendy, Professor Campbell's wife, runs three farms in the vicinity of Dunedin, and Professor Campbell was a willing farm worker when medical duties allowed. The lofty levels of medicine were easily exchanged for mustering stock on the hills of Abbotsford with a trusty dog on the team. Wendy gave Professor Campbell solid support during his medical career, and Professor Campbell reciprocated on the farms. They both enjoyed scouring the antique shops in Otago and Southland for works of art, porcelain and other items to enrich the farmhouse. Professor Campbell derived great enjoyment from his three talented children, Anna, Peter and Tom, and their children. He was interested in all sport, and could be a fearsome and competitive foe on the squash court or cricket pitch, even when injured.

Professor Campbell will be fondly remembered by all who had the privilege of working with him. He was a role model par excellence in his clinical, academic and leadership roles. On numerous dimensions, he elevated the practice of medicine in New Zealand.

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<http://www.nzma.org.nz/journal/read-the-journal/all-issues/2010-2019/2017/vol-130-no-1449-27-january-2017/7149>
