Obituary

Jack Walsh MD FRCP FRCS

Jack Walsh, previously director of the National Spinal Injuries Centre, Stoke Mandeville Hospital, died in Princes Risborough on 31st December 1992. Jack Walsh came to Stoke Mandeville Hospital for 3 months training in 1947 and stayed for the next 30 years. The centre had been started by the late Sir Ludwig Guttman in 1944 and in the early days treated only injured servicemen. All the patients arrived with classical complications of paraplegia, in particular urinary complications and pressure sores. Jack Walsh soon became expert in managing these complications and was instrumental in establishing regimes of prevention and treatment which were later copied throughout the world. He also made a significant contribution to the understanding of fertility in paraplegics.

From the beginning he was Guttman's most trusted assistant. Together they formed an excellent team, Guttman brimming with ideas and travelling the world, Jack Walsh remaining at home and putting the ideas into practice. Jack Walsh became deputy director of the National Spinal Injuries Centre in 1960 and director in 1966 until his retirement in 1976. He was a kind, considerate and patient man and it was these qualities that enabled him to lead the

centre successfully from Guttman's relatively autocratic regime to its present liberal and caring attitude without losing discipline, impetus or its worldwide reputation.

He was chairman of the Review Committee of the Department of Health which recommended the setting up of additional spinal injuries centres so that there was a proper distribution of spinal services throughout the country. His opinion and help were widely sought and he became honorary consultant to the Royal Star & Garter Home, The Chaseley Trust and the National Medical Rehabilitation Centre, Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Dun Laoghaire, Eire. In recent years he has been adviser to the Indian government on the establishment of a National Spinal Injuries Centre in Delhi.

Jack was very popular and was highly respected by his peers; indeed he was the first secretary/treasurer of the International Medical Society of Paraplegia playing a major role in the development of the society. On retirement he was elected an emeritus member of that society. He wrote a book for patients and their relatives called *Understanding Paraplegia* which was very well received, and was subsequently translated into many languages. Apart from a few key publications he did not write much; he preferred to spend all his time with his patients and was much admired and loved by all the patients of the centre. There are still many paraplegic and tetraplegic patients alive today who gratefully acknowledge that they owe their 'new lives' to Jack Walsh. With his passing we have lost another of the great pioneers who established the specialty of spinal cord injuries.

In 1946 he married Joan who died a few weeks before him. They are survived by three sons, a daughter and eight grandchildren.

Hans Frankel
Stoke Mandeville Hospital
Aylesbury England