

# In Memory of Professor George Lewith (1950-2017)

## Abstract

This article is a collection of eulogies published to mark the passing of Professor George Lewith.

By: Andrew Flower

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Professor George Lewith (1950-2017). Photo with kind permission of John Cairns ([www.johncairns.co.uk](http://www.johncairns.co.uk))

George Lewith, Professor of Health Research and Director of the Complementary and Integrated Medicine Research Unit at the University of Southampton, died unexpectedly on March 17th 2017. His death was a sad and terrible shock for many people, both personally and professionally. Indeed, it is an indication of George's unique quality that these domains were rarely separated. His warmth, generosity and kindness came together with his sharp intellect, practical energy, and academic rigour and it was this combination of head and heart that allowed George to touch people so deeply-in his life, and in his untimely death.

For me personally George was an inspiration, a guide and mentor, and increasingly a good friend. He supervised me during my PhD and mentored me during my post-doctoral fellowship. He provided immense support for me at a number of different

levels and had an incredibly positive influence on my life. I will miss him hugely and always be grateful to him.

When George died I emailed a number of people to tell them the sad news. I received an extraordinary number of replies from many people saying what a profound influence George had made on their lives and work. *The Journal of Chinese Medicine* asked me to collate some of these emails as a tribute to George's life and work. I start by quoting the eulogy made by Prof Paul Little (an internationally renowned researcher in Primary Care and a close friend and colleague of George's) at a memorial service that describes some of George's achievements in CAM and primary care research. The quotes that follow on from this are selected from a diverse range of people involved in the practise, research and teaching of acupuncture and herbal medicine. They speak for themselves.

## Eulogy

George had a stellar career, and even the simple list I am about to give is a fraction of what George achieved. George graduated from Trinity College, Cambridge in medicine and biochemistry. He then went on to Westminster Medical School for clinical training and began working clinically in 1974. In 1977, he became a member of the Royal College of Physicians, and in 1980, a member of the Royal College of General Practitioners. Later in 1999, he was elected a fellow of the Royal College of Physicians.

He set up, ran and managed the largest private practice in integrated medicine in the UK with various NHS contracts (London, Southampton and Manchester) between 1980 and 2005 and worked at main board level with Boots plc to develop their wellbeing centres (2000-2005). He was involved with various organisations as a consultant both nationally and internationally - including the NIH and FDA in the US and the WHO. In 2003, George developed and initiated the first annual conference on Complementary and Alternative Medicine Strategies, Training, Research and New Developments (CAMSTRAND). He was a director of the International Society for Complementary Medicine Research and regularly

presented at the Congresses convened by the Consortium. In addition to his Professorial post in our group he had a visiting chair at the University of Westminster Centre for Resilience. George travelled widely, and had a very extensive international networks, including working very closely with the Beijing University of Chinese Medicine. George was still at the height of his abilities, perhaps the most effective international advocate for the complementary and integrative medicine.

He was also I think CAM's most able researcher, and his advocacy was always based on the strength of his research. I can't think of an individual who has contributed more to the development of the CAM research agenda. He conducted research within primary care, and complementary and integrative medicine for 35 years, publishing more than 350 peer-reviewed papers, and more than £15 million in grants. In the feedback from the RAE in 2008 the CAM group was one of two groups working within primary care highlighted for the high quality of the research. It was always incredible to me how George had managed to gain funding for CAM, since getting conventional public funding is almost impossible to lever – in no small part for his ability to ask the right question in the right way, and to keep going with good ideas when others would have given up long ago. George made things happen in a way that was awe-inspiring.

*Professor Paul Little (University of Southampton)*

### Tributes

George was a dear friend to many, and a positive and sane anchor for so many of us in the complex world of CM. George contributed so much thought, energy and innovation to the field, distance proved no barrier in his support of many colleagues around the globe. He was always so generous with his time and thoughtful care.

*Alan Bensoussan*

George has made a huge contribution to research in complementary and alternative medicine. As a medical doctor, he also showed how complementary medicine could be integrated into a mainstream clinical setting, and did much to encourage adoption of some complementary therapies into the National Health Service (NHS).

*Alliance for Natural Health*

Such sad news. George has made a great contribution to the development of Chinese medicine. Willing to put himself in the firing line of those dogmatically opposed to anything other than pharmaceuticals. The last time I spoke to him he was in the back of a cab, squeezing some time in busy schedule to give advice and support.

*Ian Appleyard*

George had a rare clarity of mind and made a large contribution to advancing our knowledge and understanding. His generosity and supportiveness are evident from the many tributes to him. He will certainly be greatly missed.

*Richard Blackwell*

We lost an outstanding and great person, excellent researcher and a really good friend!

*Benno Brinkhaus*

This is sad news indeed. George Lewith was a notable figure on the acupuncture landscape even when I started out and he has been doing good work on our behalf ever since then. When put in the media spotlight George always performed with aplomb, giving measured and reasonable responses even to unreasonable questions.

*Charlie Buck*

In addition to his contribution to PRINCESS, George was one of the world's pre-eminent researchers in primary care, especially in the field of integrated medicine, and he published over 330 papers. But perhaps most important, George was a great humanist, a real mensch. His kindness and support of others was legendary. We will all miss this great son of Cardiff, especially his wonderful, gentle, razor-sharp scientific mind, and his true friendship.

*Professor Chris Butler*

Visit to the master without finding him

Beneath the pines, I ask the boy...

'My master has gone to gather herbs...

Only in these mountains the clouds are so deep,

I don't know where.'

*Chia Tao (T'ang poet, 779-843)*

*Sent by Francesco Cardini*

He was a real firecracker and a great spirit and did such a lot for the world of CAM and its champions in all their forms. He was personally very helpful and supportive to me and I will miss him.

*Emma Farrant*

We all love George deeply. We are grateful for everything he has done for us, for the research of TCM. He was such a great person. I miss him. I will always remember him and be deeply grateful to him

*Yutong Fei*

There aren't that many good guys like George who really get things to happen.

*Simon King*

I'm absolutely devastated, he was one of the kindest and most intelligent souls I've ever met, I still can't believe he has gone. He will be very sorely missed by all of us who have had the pleasure of knowing and working closely with him.

*Lily Lai*

He was an amazing guy, incredibly helpful to so many people. It is very hard to understand how such a vibrant presence can be, and then be no more. But his light will go on shining.

*Nick Lampert*

It is such bad news and very astonished to hear the news! George is our long-term best friend, and he helped us a lot and contributed his wise and intelligent to our work and our team. We benefited a lot from him. His love and friendship will keep in our heart forever. It is such a big loss for all of us.

*Jianping Liu*

He has been such a good colleague over the years, and he will be much missed.

*Hugh MacPherson*

Oh how he will be missed! George was so full of life and enthusiasm I can't really imagine that I can't pick up the phone and call him anytime I needed his advice. He never once was too busy to help and was always positive however dire the circumstances. He always supported the underdog and never bought into the establishment view that complementary medicine had no place in scientific medicine. He was a power of strength to us all and we don't need to ask for whom this particular bell tolls - it tolls for all of us who have benefitted in countless ways from George's desire for research and development of CAM. I can't think of a single person who has done more to support CAM practice in its various forms.

*Michael McIntyre*

As so many colleagues and friends of George have demonstrated, George was truly a very special and gorgeous man. Many have reflected on the warmth, caring, support and indeed love he offered so many. George was a precious friend to many and a sane anchor in the complex world of Chinese medicine. He was an international champion in establishing the evidence base for Chinese medicine, forever generous with his time. His legacy is that his work has influenced what we do and how we do it, and his research and interactions have touched and improved the lives of many. George visited his friends and team at NICM on various occasions as we did his Southampton Centre or London practice. Time to discuss was always on the cards. One of our postdocs, Dr Suzanne Grant's message below echoes the numerous heartfelt

comments by colleagues and friends of George: 'The loss of George Lewith will be deeply felt by many in our field of practice and research. As an early career researcher, George made me feel that the work I was undertaking really mattered. That I, and my work, was significant in some way. He offered his substantial grey matter, his connections and his time with such commitment, verve and sharp observation. As an emerging researcher, I was so grateful for this support, this mentoring. In my conversations with other young scholars, I realised that while I was 'special', there were so many others that he supported in the same indefatigable way. He drew people together. Made connections. He was a man that was incredibly generous with his brilliant intellect and profound humanity.'

George will live in our hearts and minds forever. Thank you for blessing our lives with yours.

*On behalf of NICM at Western Sydney University.*

We will miss his genuine passion and will do our best to live up to his vision.

*Sebastian Pole*

I was so very sad to hear that George passed away. I have always enjoyed discussing with him, and I am deeply thankful for his support regarding my European Journal of Integrative Medicine and the Journal of Herbal Medicine, two out of seven Elsevier journals where George was an Editorial Board member.

*Vanessa Quodt*

I am shocked and saddened by this news. George was a lovely man and so committed to the cause of sound research for CAM. I will not only miss him very much, but will miss his presence in all our work.

*Trevor Wing*

I am very shocked and saddened by this news. I have known George for almost 30 years and worked with him at his practice in London for some of those. He has been a giant in complementary medicine; a fearless pioneer of good research and good practice - and good medicine in general. I have always had enormous respect for him and his speedy and productive energy has never been less than awe-inspiring.

*Jacqueline Young*

I will never forget him, he is still and will always live in my heart. He will be with us forever! I can't sleep last night, I always saw George stand in front of me with his smile in my mind. I am painfully sad!

*Yu He*