Obituary: Professor Graham Ayliffe 1926 - 2017

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Professor Ayliffe receiving his Lifetime Achievement Award from Professor Heather Loveday and Tricia Hart at the IPS Annual Conference 2016.

It is with great sadness that we mark the passing of Professor Graham Ayliffe on 22nd May 2017 in his 91st year. Professor Ayliffe was widely regarded nationally and internationally as the founder of infection prevention and control. He has a long and distinguish career in science, as a government advisor, and in a long and close association with the Infection Prevention Society and its sister societies.

Graham was born in 1926 in Hambrook, Gloucestershire, educated at Queen Elizabeth's Hospital School in Bristol and went on to study medicine at Bristol University.

His interest in microorganisms started at the age of 10 when he acquired a cheap microscope, but was consolidated in the four years he spent at the pathology department at Bristol Royal Infirmary under Professor W Gillespie. It was here that he developed his interest in hospital infection and continued this at the Hammersmith hospital where he was a Research Assistant studying hospital infection and the penicillinases of *Staph. aureus* and Gram-negative bacilli.

He joined the Hospital Infection Research Laboratory in Birmingham in 1964, then directed by Professor E.J.L. Lowbury, who he replaced in 1980. His time at HIRL saw wide ranging and seminal work on the science underpinning infection prevention and control. He was responsible for more than 300 publications and his work ranged from hand hygiene and alcoholic hand disinfection, isolation wards, the emergence of antibiotic resistance and the role of plasmids, tests disinfectants and decontamination of equipment and the environment. The laboratory even carried out

one of the first large prevalence surveys of hospital infection involving over 30 hospitals in the West Midlands. Although he was the co-author or co-editor of 10 books and wrote chapters for many others, for those of us who have worked in the field for some years it was *The Control of Hospital Infection - a practical hand book*, written with E.J.L. Lowbury, A.M. Geddes and J.D. Williams in 1975 for which he was best known. At a time when information on infection prevention and control was difficult to find – this was our 'bible'. Graham developed the six-step process for hand washing with Lynda Taylor, as a means of standardising the process as part of a research study; as we all know this has been widely adopted in clinical practice. Graham did have other interests apart from IPC. He was an expert in the history of swords and archaeology and was himself an expert fencer. He was selected for the English team in 1960, has been President of Birmingham Fencing Club for over 20 years and continued to fence in his eighties.

Graham, together with his colleague Brendan Moore, was instrumental in the formation of the Infection Control Nurses Association in 1970. He was President of the Association in 1976 and on his retirement in 1996 the ICNA inaugurated an annual lecture in his name for services to hospital infection. He was also a Trustee of the Brendan Moore trust. He continued to actively support the ICNA and subsequently the IPS for the rest of his life. He always attended the annual Infection Prevention Conference with Janet, his wife at his side, to hear the Ayliffe Lecture and present the speaker with a signed copy of his book *'Hospital Infection: From Miasmas to MRSA'*; his presence at the Gala dinner gave many members the opportunity to chat with him and hear his views on challenges past and present. In 2016 the Society created the Ayliffe Lifetime Achievement Award and celebrated his enormous contribution to our specialty by naming him the first recipient. The standing ovation that followed Graham's acceptance of the award was testament to the warmth of feeling and high regard in which Professor Ayliffe was held. His enormous charm and quiet wit will be sadly missed.

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