

Ken will be sadly missed by his colleagues, friends, family and numerous patients in the Colchester and Chelmsford area.

He is survived by his wife Beryl and his two sons and one daughter. His son, David, is a consultant psychiatrist in Somerset.

N. BALOCH

John Towers, formerly Consultant Psychiatrist Graylingwell Hospital, Sussex

John Towers was not only an exceptional man and outstanding physician, but also a pioneer in the care of the elderly mentally ill. His colleagues and contemporaries in Chichester all remember him with real affection and his achievements with gratitude.

John was born in 1922 and studied for his BM, BCh at Oxford and then at Kings College Hospital. It was here that he met Barbara, a fellow student. They married, working happily together and bringing up their family in Chichester. John qualified first, and in 1945 he was appointed house physician, and then house surgeon, at Kings.

A testing and influential experience at this time was his recruitment to a medical team which went to the concentration camp at Belsen soon after its liberation, an event that almost certainly enhanced his sensitivity to protracted human suffering and his awareness of the need to enact efficient and rapid measures to bring relief, attitudes and skills that remained evident throughout his career.

John moved to Chichester in 1946, first as RMO at the Royal West Sussex Hospital and then in 1950, having taken his DPM, as psychiatrist at Graylingwell, where he completed his prize-winning MD thesis on temporal lobe epilepsy and mental illness. In 1955 he was appointed consultant psychiatrist. He was elected a Fellow of the College in 1976.

John had a wide knowledge of general medicine as well as being a dedicated psychiatrist and, when to these assets are added his genuine sympathy and tolerance of patients with long-term illnesses, he was most aptly qualified for his chosen role of caring for the elderly. In particular, he had an awareness of the needs of those with Alzheimer's and other dementias and he knew the importance of providing them with medical as well as psychiatric understanding.

His intuitive feeling for the needs of the elderly patient led him to introduce new facilities for their systematic care, both in Graylingwell and in the district, and to this end he quickly launched an effective geriatric service at the hospital, one which benefited both the patients and their relatives. It was also a service to which not only his team of nurses and carers were proud to belong, but also one which general practitioners, who enjoyed his straightforward and practical

approach, supported enthusiastically. In this way John Towers became a psycho-geriatrician before this category of psychiatrist had been formally recognised.

John was an innovator in that he recognised the urgency of making provisions for the increasing proportion of the elderly population in West Sussex. Graylingwell in the late 1950s was already in the forefront in developing community services for the mentally ill, a process which John hastened. He pioneered one of the earliest schemes for providing effective community care for elderly patients. To achieve this he recruited a dedicated team, including the first community psychiatric nurse in this district. Furthermore, he promoted close liaison with the social services – another novel undertaking – and fostered collaboration with the general practitioners.

Home visiting was another feature of his community care service and at this he was especially skilled. He had the gift of being able to empathise with even the most awkward patient, always being sensitive to the problems facing both them and their carers. These qualities, combined with his innate kindness, humanity, and his lack of any pretentiousness made his domiciliary visits such a help. Moreover, he especially enjoyed this aspect of the work which gave him so much insight into the real problems facing both patient and family. He was undeterred by obstacles if he felt he was needed. It is surprising that no one called the police to arrest a big dark man climbing through the window of a house (sometimes it was the wrong house), but he was always welcome!

John retired from full-time work as a consultant in 1982, but he continued in a part-time role for another ten years so that he could help a heavily burdened department and because he wanted to continue assisting a group of patients to whose care he was committed.

The esteem in which he was held in our locality, and our gratitude for what he achieved in relieving the distressed, is marked today by naming the new accommodation for the use of relatives of dying patients 'The John Towers Suite'.

He bore his final illness with fortitude and his usual humour – an enduring quality we all enjoyed.

John Towers derived great happiness from his home. He is survived by his wife, Barbara, and their four children and they have all our sympathy.

PETER SAINSBURY

The deaths of the following have also been reported:

DENIS BARKER, consultant psychiatrist, Harley Chambers, 63 Palmer Place, North Adelaide, SA 5006, Australia.