



Professor John Francis
'Jack' Fowler D.Sc.
F.Inst.P. (1925-2016)

Jack Fowler, renowned medical physicist turned clinical radiobiologist, passed away on 1st December 2016, two months before his 92nd birthday. He was Director of the Gray Laboratory in Northwood for 18 years from 1970. His awards include Gold Medals of ESTRO (1983), ASTRO (1995), and the RRS Failla Award (2002). Honorary ARR membership was bestowed on him in 2007 (see ARR website summary). At various times Jack was President of the Hospital Physicists Association, the European Society of Radiation Biology and the British Institute of Radiology. After official retirement, Jack held research appointments at various universities, notably Madison (USA), Leuven (Belgium) and Umeå (Sweden). He continued publishing numerous papers and 2 books over a remarkable period of 62 years from his first publication in 1953.

Jack's intellectual brilliance and outgoing personality were a heady mixture for clinical colleagues with whom he engaged with enthusiasm. The outstanding clinical collaborations were with Professor Stanley Dische and Professor Michele Saunders at Mount Vernon Hospital with whom he worked on the CHART trials testing accelerated hyperfractionation, but he was also an icon for generations of clinical oncology trainees. Inspired by his passion and patience in teaching trainees the principles of radiation biology, clinicians agreed his lectures were master classes in the enjoyment of science.

On 19th June 2015 the first L H Gray Memorial Trust Symposium was held at The Academy of Medical Sciences in London (top left photo), marking the year of Jack Fowler's 90th birthday, his achievements and the way forward. This multi-disciplinary meeting brought together experts in radiobiology, medical physics and clinical oncology involved in radiotherapy related research. Topics included dose fractionation and repopulation, hypoxia and response modifiers, new techniques and predictive tests.

Jack's career details (see the Obituary in the December 2016 issue of Radiotherapy and Oncology) highlight the qualities that may inspire current young radiation scientists to emulate such a remarkable leading scientist: 1) start by having an exceptional supervisor, 2) work all hours on a problem area that likely already was considered very important by the previous generation but not yet solved because of the lack of appropriate tools now becoming available e.g. predictive tests for cancer patient treatment outcomes, 3) publish and lecture extensively and network with high profile scientists in the same field, 4) go one step further and engender the enduring respect of fellow scientists and the confidence of supportive funding agencies.

Jack will be remembered by many for his enthusiasm, inspiration, devotion to improving cancer radiotherapy, generous nature to colleagues and students alike, and long service.

Jolyon Hendry (Manchester) and John Yarnold (Sutton) December 2016