



John Arthur Reginald Miles

John Miles (CBE) was born in Sidcup, England, in 1913 and received his medical education at Cambridge University and St Thomas's Hospital, London.



After graduation in 1938, he spent several years training in Pathology at St Thomas's and 5 years (1946–1950) as Huddersfield Lecturer in Special Pathology, University of Cambridge, and completed his MD in 1951.

John accepted a position as Chief of the Medical Research Division, Institute of Medical and Veterinary Science in Adelaide in 1951, before coming to New Zealand in 1955 as the Professor of Microbiology at the University of Otago, a position which he continued to hold with distinction for 23 years.

At the time of John's arrival at Otago, the name of the department had recently been changed from Bacteriology on the movement of the previous Head, Sir Charles Hercus, to Dean of the Medical School.

John will always be remembered as a medical scientist of great distinction, who continually fostered the links between science and medicine, something unusual back in the mid-1950s. He clearly became the father of microbiology as a scientific tertiary discipline in New Zealand, and was the driving force behind the establishment and subsequent success of the Department of Microbiology (now the Department of Microbiology and Immunology) at the University of Otago—a department presently containing over 50 post-graduate students. John's prime objective of excellence in research has clearly continued.

John was a Fellow of the Royal Society of Medicine, London, an internationally recognised microbiologist and Consultant for the World Health Organization (WHO), and a member of many research assessing committees and international societies. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of New Zealand in 1962, and served as President from 1966 to 1970. His contributions to academic microbiology and medical research were recognised with the award of the CBE in 1971.

John's early work in Adelaide involved studies on the cause and epidemiology of Murray Valley encephalitis, and this interest in viruses transmitted to humans by mosquitoes continued after his move to Otago in 1955 and subsequent (1960) appointment as Honorary Director of the MRC Virus Research Unit in Dunedin. Here he set up field studies of arthropod-borne viruses both in New Zealand and in several Pacific Islands.

He was involved with the isolation of Whataroa virus in South Westland, with studies of dengue in Fiji, with respiratory viruses in New Zealand and Fiji, with the massive epidemic of Ross River virus in the Pacific, with hepatitis viruses in New Zealand and

the Pacific, and (not long before retirement) with an expedition to study scrub typhus in the Solomon Islands.

He was instrumental in setting up the Wellcome Virus Laboratory in Suva in the early 1970s. This laboratory was staffed from Dunedin and provided research and routine diagnostic facilities for the region. Through his involvement with WHO, John was able to establish good contacts with laboratories all around the world, and his experience was recognised through his membership of several WHO Expert Committees.

He was an author of 138 scientific publications between 1936 and 1981. His principal leisure activities included ornithology and fishing, while his generosity as a host and passion for rowing and for spaniel dogs will be remembered by many. Another important thread in John's life was his Anglican faith, and he was actively involved with St Pauls' Cathedral in Dunedin and more latterly with St Columba Church in Wanaka. He was a life member of the St Martin's Island community in Dunedin.

After his retirement from the University, John moved permanently to his holiday home at Hawea, although he remained a frequent visitor to Dunedin and the Department. His first wife, Ruth, died in 1980 and his second wife, Vi (nee Miller), died in 2003.

John died at Elmslie House, Wanaka, on January 20, 2004, after a brief illness. He is survived by two daughters from his first marriage.

We are grateful to Professor Sandy (J.M.B.) Smith for this obituary, and we also thank Terry Maguire for supplying the photograph.