



David Cargill Heaton

July 1943–May 2009

David's quiet humanitarianism inspired many of those who worked with him. He was one of the leaders in Haematology in New Zealand in the 1980s and 1990s, and his death due to cancer at only 65 years has saddened many.



David was born in Queensland, Australia in 1943, the son of a Methodist Minister. He attended medical school in Brisbane, and in 1972 he became a haematology trainee in the Prince of Wales/Prince Henry Hospital in Sydney.

He was subsequently offered a consultant position in Christchurch, a city he had visited as a young elective student.

Although Lyn, his wife, had never been to New Zealand, she took it on trust that Christchurch would be place that they would enjoy living for many years. David contributed to Haematology and General Medicine in Christchurch for the next 24 years (1977–2001).

He was one of the founding members of the New Zealand Association of Haematology, holding the positions of Secretary and Treasurer, and then President (1988–1990). He was an examiner of the Royal Australasian College of Pathologists, as well as Chief Examiner for the Technologists Board (NZIMLT).

In his early days in Christchurch, he had particular involvement with the transfusion service. During this time, noting the falsely high platelet count given by the laboratory machine on a young man with aplastic anaemia, he made the original observation that red cells of patients who were Kidd negative lacked the urea transport system. This finding was subsequently confirmed by the Mayo Clinic in 2003.

Although in his modesty he didn't necessarily seek such positions, David's innate sense of fairness and integrity made him a natural leader. In 1987, David returned from a meeting in Australia to find that the Chairman of Pathology Services had died unexpectedly and that David in his absence had been nominated to take over the leadership of Pathology Services in Christchurch. Having had this position thrust upon him, he took it very seriously and obtained a DHSM from Massey University. Although he relinquished that position during the "health reforms" in the 1990s, he remained Medical Director of the Haematology Laboratory until 1999.

One of the things the Christchurch hospital community will remember David for most is his role in the creation of the "Haemostasis Service". During the era of HIV infections in haemophiliacs he had become increasingly involved with haemophilia at a local and national level. From 1993 to 1998 he chaired both the Haemostasis

Committee of the NZHS and the Medical Advisory Committee of the New Zealand Haemophilia Society, out of which came the National Treatment Guidelines. In the early 1990s he used his abilities in drawing people together to create hospital-wide guidelines on treatment of thrombosis and to set up the much valued outpatient Haemostasis Service.

He moved to Liverpool, Sydney in 2001 for family reasons and worked there until unexpected ill health forced him to retire in 2007.

David's prime concern as a doctor was to treat patients as humanely and effectively as possible. For this reason, his patients loved him and his colleagues held him in very high regard.

He was also always a very dedicated family man. He will be greatly missed by his wife Lyn and their three children.

Dr Ruth Spearing (Consultant Haematologist at Christchurch Hospital) wrote this obituary with assistance from David's family.