David Anthony Waite
24 October 1946–22 November 2014

MB ChB (Otago), FRACP, FRNZCGP, DIH (Otago), Dip Av Med (Otago), FFOM (RCP)

David died on 22 November 2014, 14 months after he was diagnosed with a brain tumour. He knew and accepted his prognosis, but his competitive spirit came out when he was able say he had lived longer than the average mortality statistics with this condition would suggest. His funeral was held at the Catholic Cathedral, Wellington, and was attended by 1,000 friends, family and colleagues—a very real tribute to someone who was known and respected by many and who had such a multiplicity of professional interests. He was gregarious and supportive of others, both colleagues and patients. He was a great communicator and managed his diverse life with verve, focus and positivity.

David was born in Wellington, the third child of Captain William Waite RNZN and Teresa Waite. His father was a naval officer and the family had to travel often. As a result, his education was in both New Zealand and in the UK; however his secondary schooling was at St Patricks College, Silverstream. His first year at university was at Victoria, where he sat medical intermediate and was accepted into Otago Medical School the following year. During that first university year, his father was diagnosed with a terminal malignancy and died during David’s final exams. It was a tribute to his determination that he was able to focus and succeed during that stressful time.

After graduation from Otago in 1970, David spent 2 years as a house surgeon at Wellington hospital and then embarked on a career in pathology at Case Western Hospital; however he quickly found that the lack of live patient contact was not for him and he returned to New Zealand. He took up a registrar post at Palmerston North Hospital and in his typically determined way, studied for and passed his FRACP examinations in a record time. He subsequently spent 7 years as a registrar at Wellington Hospital while undertaking research with Professors Ian Prior and Tom O'Donnell. He was able...
to put his name to some 11 major research publications relating to his interest in respiratory medicine.

In 1978, David made a major career decision and took up solo general practice in Wadestown. At the same time he maintained a teaching post at the Wellington Clinical School, as well as developing his lifelong interest in occupational medicine.

He was well known and very well respected in the occupational medicine community, both in New Zealand and overseas. David brought his humanity, his internal medicine expertise, common sense and practicality, and his socialism to bear on a worker-centric practice of occupational health in New Zealand. He entered occupational medicine when it was still emerging as a speciality and went on to gain the Fellowship of the Faculty of Occupational Medicine from the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland. He completed the Diploma of Industrial Health in 2000 and the Diploma in Aviation Medicine 2 years later. He was awarded the John Stoke Medal for Service to Occupational Medicine, and was president of the Australian and New Zealand Society of Occupational Medicine and the Occupational Health Education Trust. He ran occupational medicine services for TranzRail, InterIsland Line, Hutt Valley Health, and BP. He was awarded the BP Chairman's prize for his groundbreaking work for the global company; notably tanker driver fatigue and innovative, ergonomically sound BP petrol stations. He was an inspiration to many younger aspiring occupational health practitioners, to whom he gave his time and energy, as always, fully and generously.

In addition to general practice and occupational medicine, he worked as a MOSS in the Neurology Department at Wellington Hospital, Occupational Physician at Hutt Hospital, was an advisor to PHARMAC on the Exceptional Circumstances Panel, a quality assurance assessor to the Medical Council and travelled extensively as an ACC reviewer.

Outside of medicine, David had a multitude of interests. He was an ardent conservationist and took great pride in developing the family retreat in Miro Bay, Pelorus Sound (without power and only reachable by water) where he and his children destroyed legions of opossums and pine trees. He planted over 2,000 Australian Blackwoods and was able to mill the first of these before he died.

He was passionate about rugby and did not pass opportunities to watch when his third son played rugby for Otago University, Sydney University, the Turbos and in Japan. He was also able to enjoy watching his grandson playing for Grammar Juniors in Auckland.

He loved classical music and never missed chamber music concerts or the International Festival of the Arts in Wellington.

He took a keen interest in politics and was a staunch supporter of the Labour Party. He made his political views known on a number of occasions, including successfully resigning from the Otago University Medical Corps as a protest against the Vietnam War. He marched against the Springbok rugby tour in 1981 and was part of a group of prominent academics who carried out a silent protest in Parliament against one of the more egregious activities of Robert Muldoon (he and the other protesters were banned from parliament grounds for a year by the Speaker of the House for this).

David was an enthusiastic sportsman and had a real love for animals, Labradors in particular.

David had an encyclopaedic memory and was a master of esoteric information. As a school boy he could name the capital of every country in the world and was a key player in any general knowledge quiz.

He was a member of the Wellington Club and facilitated the College of Physicians social functions for registrars from Wellington Hospital who had passed the examinations.

Upon the diagnosis of his brain tumour, he approached his final months with an extraordinary inquisitiveness and courage. He enjoyed life to the end and filled the house with visitors. As the tumour progressed, he would explain in detached clinical detail what new neurological deficit was occurring. Notwithstanding, he made the most of his time, travelling round the country sightseeing and saying farewell to friends. He even travelled to Australia (at the cost of a deep vein thrombosis and a pulmonary embolus) to see a grandchild for one last time.
David was very brave during his last illness and made great use of his time, but this could only have occurred because of the selfless care and nursing by his wife, Janet and his children.

David is survived by his wife Janet and his four children, William (Auckland), James (Washington DC), Alex (Auckland) and Julia (Auckland).

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