

David Jordan

1953–2007

David Jordan BSc, PhD, DSc (University of Birmingham), Professor of Physiology (UCL, University College London) died aged 54 on Saturday 30 June 2007 following a short illness. Born on 14 April 1953, he was the only child of Brenda and Harry Jordan. He was raised in Jarrow, Tyneside, North East England and attended Jarrow Springfield Secondary School (1964–1971). From 1971–1977 he studied at the University of Birmingham receiving a BSc in Biological Sciences (1974) and a PhD (1977) for his studies on *The termination and excitability of sinus nerve afferents* (supervisor Mike Spyer).

In 1980, following a 3 year research fellowship in the Physiology Department at the University of Birmingham, he moved to a lectureship in the Department of Physiology at the Royal Free Hospital School of Medicine (University of London). David was promoted to senior lecturer in 1988 and to reader in 1993. He spent a sabbatical (1988–1989) at the Cardiovascular Institute, University of California, San Francisco where he was a Julius H Comroe Research Fellow. Following his promotion to Professor in 1999, and the merger with UCL, David was made Head of Department on the Royal Free Campus.

Over the period 1980–1988 David's primary research association was with Mike Spyer. He was awarded his first independent research grant in 1983. In 1988 he began a research collaboration with Andrew Ramage, funded by the Wellcome Trust and British Heart Foundation, which continued until the time of his death. The many papers that flowed from their partnership have significantly increased our understanding of the role of 5-hydroxytryptamine receptors in the central nervous control of cardiovascular function.

His various review articles, book chapters and editorial activities (a member of the Editorial Board of *The Journal of Physiology* from 1989 to 1996 and a Senior Editor from 1992 to 1994) exemplify David's scholarship. He was a member of the British Heart Foundation's Project Grants Committee from 1998 to 2002.

David's input to teaching, examining and committee work was considerable. He ran a number of courses in both the



science and medical degree programmes, and served as an undergraduate and higher degree external examiner both within the UK and overseas.

David's numerous contributions to academic life will be missed greatly by colleagues. David is survived by his parents and Ken, his partner for more than 30 years.

Michael P Gilbey

An appreciation by an old student

Physiologists of Dublin were shocked to hear of the premature death of this fine scientist. David was an authority on autonomic neuro-science, but not an authoritarian by character.

I was his first PhD student. The interaction between mentor and pupil was of an old-fashioned type and David made me feel free in the laboratory we shared. This intellectual freedom, so beloved of Carl Ludwig¹, commenced with a digression; David's grant was for studies on central control of airways but my doctoral studies wandered into the vagal control of the heart. Obviously David agreed with Laurence Sterne² that digressions are the sunshine and soul of learning.

Of physiological material he was a constant reader and he had an enviable talent for critical analysis. He was drawn to papers exhibiting internal consistency, logical structure and clarity. In a phrase he relished elegance in science. He was adept at rapidly uncovering contradictions or inconsistencies. At meetings of our Society when David exposed two mutually exclusive statements, he would enquire optimistically which one was correct. David's farewell gift to me was a copy of Fulton's *Selected readings in the history of physiology*. It contains small extracts of

seminal papers, little kernels heralding imminent revolutions in physiological knowledge.

Few of us stumble upon great discoveries and Ernest Starling³ wrote that prizes and honours should not be awarded to the fortunate discoverer, since the joy of discovery contains its own reward, but should be used to console the careful scientist, the constant reader, the corrector of errors, the humble assiduous gardener of the growing tree of knowledge whose fruit will come in due season. In his brief letter to *Nature*, Starling might have been writing about my future supervisor. David Jordan had a kind heart. God rest this fine scholar.

James F X Jones

1. Carl Ludwig (1816–1895) wrote in a letter to Setchenow: 'It is mandatory to be at a place where one feels most free in spirit. Only there one is able to make the greatest progress'. Cited in Zimmer H G (1996). Carl Ludwig: the man, his time, his influence. *Pflugers Arch* **432**, R9–22.

2. Laurence Sterne (1713–1768). Author of *The life and opinions of Tristram Shandy, gentleman*.

3. Starling E H (1924). Discovery and research. *Nature* **113**, 606.

Reminiscences

I am not sure exactly when I met Dave Jordan. It was sometime in the early 1990s, a few years after I had begun researching central nerve pathways that control the cardiovascular system. Lynne Weaver (University of Western Ontario, Canada) introduced us at a conference in the US. For a number of reasons, Lynne thought Dave was an absolutely lovely man. She had spent 1979 at the University of Birmingham, where Dave had taught her how to do extracellular electrophysiology on central neurons, and he was one of the main reasons that her year in Birmingham was so much fun.

Through the 1990s, Dave and I met at conferences where we shared a number of highly enjoyable scientific conversations, drinks and dinners. As a result, I made my first visit to give a talk at the Department of Physiology at what was then the Royal Free Hospital School of Medicine in 1996. However, my relationship with Dave did not really begin to 'hot up' until around the turn of the century. Although my focus until then had been spinal cardiovascular control pathways, I was becoming increasingly interested in the medulla. We began to discuss the possibility of

setting up in Dave's laboratory the method of juxtacellular labelling, which would allow us to examine the anatomy of neurons in the nucleus of the solitary tract (NTS) after they had been characterized electrophysiologically and pharmacologically. Dave had just received funding from the Wellcome Trust for a project on the intracellular recording of NTS neurons, so there was no problem in switching to a method that would produce a higher yield of filled cells.

From our first discussions about collaborating, Dave's depth of knowledge about central cardiovascular and central respiratory control, not only in standard laboratory mammals but also from a comparative perspective, was particularly impressive. He was also very good at explaining the intricacies of NTS electrophysiology and pharmacology to a novice ('There are *how many* 5-HT receptor subtypes in the NTS!') and showed great patience in the face of some pretty uninformed questions. These qualities clearly made him such a respected and well-liked teacher, who in his last years was reviewing the curricula and performance of new medical and dental schools in south east Asia. I think the fact that he was an unassuming boy from the north of England with very few airs and graces, even when he became the Professor of Physiology at the Royal Free and University College Medical School in 1999, also contributed to the empathetic relationships that he had with students and colleagues.

Dave employed Gareth Jones on his Wellcome Trust grant and, within weeks, Gareth and Dave were successfully filling NTS neurons with Neurobiotin and doing histochemistry to reveal them with ExtrAvidin-horseradish peroxidase. This success made me appreciate another two of Dave's admirable scientific qualities. One was that he was truly a technically expert electrophysiologist, able to get complex and difficult methods up and running when other less accomplished researchers could not. The second was that he was not only willing, but also able, to follow very detailed instructions given to him by a neuroanatomist with very exacting standards, i.e. me.

The auspicious beginning to our joint work made by Dave and Gareth became the basis for a major part of my grant application to the National Health and Medical Research Council of Australia in 2000. This application was funded from 2001 to 2003, with Dave as an Associate

Investigator. We also received support from the Wellcome Trust in the form of a Biomedical Research Collaboration Grant (9/2002-8/2005) that facilitated a number of reciprocal visits between Dave's and my laboratories.

Because Brits think Australia is very far away and Australians think that the UK is within easy reach, I visited Dave's laboratory many more times than he visited mine. Being a kind and generous person, Dave offered me a bed at his house for the duration of my first visit and that became our pattern. Most of my fondest memories of Dave come from my stays at 108 Purves Road. We had our favourite restaurants in his neighbourhood, where we enjoyed many memorable meals after working late in the lab. At least once during every visit, we would eat a frozen Indian meal from Sainsbury's at his kitchen table, drinking a bottle of Australian (or any old) red, talking serious science and intermittently gossiping our heads off. Dave always had a balanced view of life. Regardless of how busy our schedule was (or how keen I was to keep working), he made sure that we took time off to do something non-scientific. There were visits to stately homes, museums and sights of interest. Our last interlude was a wonderful day together at Aylesbury on our way to the 2005 Physiological Society meeting in Bristol. Dave was a keen gardener, and whenever I visited in spring or summer, a tour of the garden was mandatory, as was a discussion about the neighbour who had someone come in every 6 months to scythe the weeds that invaded her backyard.

I was always touched by the fact that Dave was a loving and dutiful son, who regularly telephoned his parents. I was also highly amused that he reverted to his boyhood accent when he spoke to them. Although he never said 'Ta-ra' to me, that was the way his conversations with his Mum and Dad always ended. Dave and I also spoke often by phone and I will never forget how his voice lifted from a rather flat 'hello' when he realized he was speaking to a friend.

Dave and I worked together for 7 years. During that time, many NTS neurons were filled by Gareth, Dan and Diana; and a number of brains have yet to be cut and processed for immunohistochemistry, so Dave's input to my research will continue for many years to come.

Dave's friends and colleagues speak of him fondly and think of him often. We miss him terribly. His impact on our

science and our lives has been profound.

Ida Llewellyn-Smith
Flinders University, Adelaide,
Australia

Venetia Franglen

1941–2007

I first met Venetia at UCL in 1964, when she was a PhD student and I a mere MSc student, and came to know her better as a friend and colleague when I joined the Physiology Department at King's. Her work on ion and electrolyte transport in frog skin and fetal sheep and pig skin was a development of work she had started during her PhD at Chelsea College under the supervision of SE Dicker, a leading renal physiologist, who worked on neurohormones. She also worked with Richard Durbin, an eminent gastric physiologist, on ouabain binding sites in gastric mucosa.

At King's she became deeply enmeshed in student welfare and was Sub-Dean in the Medical Faculty for 5 or 6 years. She was mother confessor to successive waves of adoring students, as a student-friendly face in the Medical Faculty.

This led to Venetia's interest in curriculum development for medical pre-clinical studies. She retired from King's and with her family, husband Geoffrey (an ex-physiologist, who ran the admissions programme at St George's Hospital Medical School) and two sons, moved to Hereford to become a tutor in biology at the Open University and then Curriculum Development Facilitator at her *alma mater*, UCL.

Living in Hereford allowed her to develop her two other great interests – her family and her Christian work. She was deeply religious, but carried this lightly. She engaged actively in the life of the Cathedral as a verger and became involved in several charities, amongst which was Cancer Experience Collaborative where she became a Research Partner.

Venetia was wonderfully friendly, kind, good natured, hospitable and generous, she devoted huge amounts of her time to others, particularly Geoffrey, who was for many years, a chronic invalid. She will be greatly missed.

Richard Naftalin

With prompts from Ana Ilundain,
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Seville, Spain.