

OBITUARY: Dr Richard Mackarness

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Richard Mackarness was a physician of great vision, a man of original mind who, though much frustrated by the sceptics in his own profession, fought with some success for the recognition in Britain of "Clinical Ecology". By his own example and as a doctor bringing relief to many people, he established that food allergies can be the cause of a variety of illnesses.

In *Not All in the Mind* (1976), Mackarness described the case of Joanna D, a young woman patient referred to him for treatment in May 1973. She had been admitted to hospital many times following outbreaks of violence to herself and her children. Dietary treatment restored her completely to a normal life free of drugs. She remains a splendid vindication of Mackarness's cause.

The *Lancet* commented on his methods, results and conclusions on 3 February 1979:

Clearly food intolerance can produce widespread symptoms in susceptible individuals, and many patients with troublesome and hitherto intractable symptoms can now be helped.

Not All in the Mind was a kind of "do-it-yourself" manual for those who suffered food-related allergies but failed to find doctors prepared to take them seriously. The basic principle was for patients to go for several days without their usual foods, and then reintroduce them one by one. If one was the cause of their allergy, they would suffer a strong reaction to it.

Mackarness was born in 1916 in Murree, India, in what is now Pakistan. His parents came originally from Scarborough. His father worked in government service as Conservator of Forests. At the age of six Richard was taken to England to be raised by a widowed aunt with five children, who became as close to him as brothers and sisters. He was educated at Lancing College and at the Westminster Teaching Hospital.

He then temporarily abandoned medicine for a course in drawing and painting at the Westminster Art School. There followed a short spell in Bombay as an illustrator and artist for the J. Walter Thompson advertising agency. At the outbreak of the Second World War he returned to Britain to enlist in the Army, but was directed to finish his medical studies. On qualifying in 1941, he was commissioned into the Royal Army Medical Corps and rose to the rank of captain.

After the war he took a number of hospital jobs, then became an illustrator and artistic adviser in an educational film company - where he met his wife, Margaret ("Hitty") Perry-Walker. He returned to full-time medical practice, first in Fulham, and from 1947 in Kew.

His first book, *Eat Fat and Grow Slim* (1958), exposed the "calorie fallacy" and proposed a non-carbohydrate "Stone Age" diet of protein and fat with no restriction as to the amount eaten. The book was immensely popular and went through six editions. While promoting it in Chicago, Mackarness

met Dr Ted Rudolph, the "father" of food and inhalant allergy who had started the "Clinical Ecology" treatment in the United States. Rudolph suggested to Mackarness that he too might benefit from finding out what he was allergic to, and thereby alleviate his tiredness.

The Randolph treatment proved so successful that Mackarness returned to England resolved to use it to help some of his difficult patients and to spread the word to other doctors. But his colleagues were suspicious of the then unfamiliar idea that diet could cure allergic manifestations, or of the suggestion of a connection between diet and mental illness.

Mackarness had a flair for writing and from the 1950s contributed a medical column first to the News Chronicle and then, on that newspaper's closure in 1960, to the Daily Mail. The strain of running a general practice combined with journalism eventually became too much, however, so in 1965 Mackarness accepted a position as a psychiatric registrar at the Park Prewett Mental Hospital, Basingstoke, where he stayed for the next 16 years. On completing the Diploma in Psychiatric Medicine, he was appointed to the permanent psychiatric staff.

It was a breakthrough for Mackarness that the first and only NHS Clinical Ecology Unit was opened at the Park Prewett Hospital while he was there. There was a rush for treatment; long queues because of the lack of NHS doctors able to advise on the subject disheartened him. He helped to found "Action Against Allergy" - now a world-wide pressure group.

He expanded on the theme of food and chemical allergies in *Chemical Victims* (1980), which dealt with the chemicals in the environment that cause migraine, depression, fatigue, skin troubles, bowel disorders, and with modern medicine's vain efforts to stem the tide by increased prescription of drugs and ever more complex surgery.

He gave the income from his two bestsellers, *Not All in the Mind* and *Chemical Victims*, to the *Chemical Victims Association*, which he also founded. His last book, written in Australia, was *A Little of What You Fancy* (1985), in which he showed how addiction/allergy to smoking, alcohol, even to coffee, can be gradually controlled.

On his retirement in 1981 Mackarness and his wife moved to Australia to be near their son, Patrick; he continued his medical work at an Alcoholic and Drug Dependency Unit and took up painting again. Sadly, in 1984 his wife died of cancer.

Richard Mackarness was an exceptional man of many talents; above all he was modest and humble, though a fighter and a born agitator, as he said of himself. He listened to his patients. He restored the quality of life to thousands suffering misery. He was a true healer.

Guy Richard Godfrey Mackarness, physician and writer: born Murree, India 17 August 1916; married 1947 Margaret Perry-Walker (died 1984; one son); died Mornington, Australia 18 March 1996.