

John St George

MB BS, FRCS, FRCOG, FRACOG

JOHN ST GEORGE was born in Malaya on 2 December 1924. His family returned to Ceylon in 1925, where he studied at St Patrick's College in Jaffna. In 1950, he graduated with Honours in medicine from the University of Ceylon in Colombo.

Between 1957 and 1959, John worked with Professor T Jeffcoate at the University of Liverpool, UK, then with Dr P Myerscough at the Eastern General Hospital, Edinburgh. He was accepted as a Member of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (1958) and a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons (1959), the International College of Surgeons (1968), and the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (1970).

After working as a Consultant in Obstetrics and Gynaecology for the Government of Ceylon from 1959 to 1964, John spent a number of years (1964–1967 and 1972–1975) as Chief Consultant in Obstetrics and Gynaecology for the government of northern Nigeria. It was there that he perfected his technique of vesicovaginal fistula repair. These fistulae, which are relatively common among rural



women, arise from obstructed labour or from application of potassium permanganate by “bush doctors” (local herbalists).

While in Nigeria, John initiated the obstetric “flying squad” to enable women in remote areas to receive emergency medical treatment, and helped to invent a two-wheel collapsible trolley for bush track roads to help reduce maternal mortality. In 1974, the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine awarded him the Langley Memorial Prize for this work.

In 1975, John migrated to Australia and set up practice at Burwood and Lakemba, in Sydney, working as a gynaecologist at the Western Suburbs Hospital until 1993. He retired in 1998.

John was passionately interested in sports and the Church. From his early years at St Patrick's College, where he was the captain of both the athletics and soccer teams, he took to heart the College's motto “*fide et labore*” (faith and work). He based his entire life on this simple yet profound philosophy, which saw him succeed in his career and adapt to many different cultures and countries with ease.

John died peacefully (of hypostatic pneumonia) at Concord Hospital on 9 December 2001, at the age of 77.

Lourdes I St George

snapshot

No room in the womb

A 34-YEAR-OLD WOMAN (gravida 5, para 2) presented to the Government Hospital in Katsina, northern Nigeria, in 1973. She was in labour and had had no antenatal care. She successfully delivered a live 3.2 kg infant.

A 14 cm right adnexal pelvic mass was noted postnatally. An x-ray and hysterosalpingogram (see picture) performed four months after the birth showed the calcified remains of an extrauterine pregnancy. The woman stated that four years earlier she had missed her periods and had consulted a “bush doctor” (local herbalist) about abdominal swelling and pain. The herbs he prescribed to rub on her abdomen had eased the pain, and her periods had returned after seven months.

The mass was easily removed from the omentum at subsequent laparotomy. Histology confirmed an advanced lithokelyphopaedion (ie, calcified fetus, membranes and placenta).



Lourdes St George*
John St George (deceased)†

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