

John Howard Tyrer

CBE, MD, FRCP(Lond), FRCP(Edin), FRACP

BORN IN SYDNEY ON 22 APRIL 1920, John Tyrer was appointed the first full-time Professor of Medicine in Queensland at the age of 34 and shaped medical teaching and research in that state for over 30 years.

John graduated in medicine from the University of Sydney in 1941 after a distinguished undergraduate career and trained as a physician at the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, Sydney. There he carried out the experimental studies on the cardiovascular dynamics of artificially perfused sheep for which he was awarded a Doctorate of Medicine.

After assuming the Chair of Medicine of the University of Queensland in 1954, John set about building a modern research-based Department of Medicine at the Royal Brisbane Hospital (then the Brisbane General Hospital), an institution whose traditions had been almost wholly clinical. He systematically recruited research-oriented academic clinicians, initially from outside Queensland and then from within. He established several “temporary clinical lectureships” that were filled by aspiring medical registrars who were given the opportunity to combine clinical responsibilities with research. Many people who spent their formative years being nurtured in such positions subsequently went on to become academic leaders in Australia. By the time of John’s retirement, in 1985, his Department of Medicine was one of



the largest and most productive in the University of Queensland, spanning three teaching hospitals.

John’s main interest lay in neurology and neuropharmacology, in which he collaborated productively with his colleague Mervyn Eadie. However, he remained an astute general physician with superb clinical acumen and skills. Perhaps his greatest legacy lies in the large number of students and junior colleagues whom he influenced and encouraged. His high academic standards, meticulous record keeping and clarity of thought and speech were salutary and refreshing.

John authored or co-authored eight books and over 100 articles. After retirement, he wrote a lavishly illustrated book, *The history of the Brisbane Hospital* — a mammoth undertaking.

John was a Francophile and collaborated with French neurologists such as Raymond Garcin and François Lhermitte. He had a special interest in language and was widely read in classical literature, history and philosophy.

John died in Brisbane on 6 June 2006 of advanced bladder cancer. He is survived by his wife Patricia and seven children.

Lawrie Powell