requested linkage and were connected by February 2009, and two additional independent practices now wish to join. Current traffic is approximately 150 studies per week in any one direction. Challenges include the resource-intensive nature of the transfer process: the personal intervention required by staff in both the public and private systems to obtain consent and the time spent on telephone communication each time a patient presents for imaging are substantial.

Since the implementation, there has been only one minor adverse incident, in which the images required were transferred in a timely fashion for a second opinion but were not reviewed until the next day. However, this did not affect the outcome for the patient.

An audit trail regarding use of the shared system and objective evidence of reduction in radiation exposure (by eliminating repeat examinations) is being collected and will hopefully be published within the next 2 years. However, there is anecdotal evidence of reduction in repeat examinations.²

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Competing interests

None identified.

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Charles Ronald Lucas
MBBS, FRACP

RON LUCAS (“ROWDY” TO HIS MATES) was one of the most outstanding infectious diseases physicians of his generation. He was a physician’s physician, and the person you would want caring for you if you were ill.

Born in Ballarat on 13 August 1932, he was educated at Ballarat Grammar School, where he excelled at football and cricket and was school captain. He studied medicine at the University of Melbourne, graduating in 1956.

After a brief period at Horsham Base Hospital, Ron joined the staff at Fairfield Infectious Diseases Hospital, where he remained until his retirement in the early 1990s.

Ron’s career spanned a most exciting and eventful era, as the field of infectious diseases was transformed from a largely descriptive branch of medicine, with limited diagnostic tools and therapeutic options, to the science-based discipline of today. Empowered by Medical Superintendent John Forbes’s view that clinical practice would only progress if it was based on strong relevant research, Ron formed a partnership with the laboratory team and helped not only to improve clinical practice but to define many important features of the epidemiology, natural history and control of some of the most common viral diseases.

He pioneered techniques for managing patients with fulminant hepatitis, established the first dialysis unit for chronic carriers of hepatitis B virus, established dedicated clinics for the care of patients infected with HIV and, in his role as founding Secretary/Treasurer of the Australasian Society for Infectious Diseases, guided the growth of that organisation.

Although shy and quiet to the point of taciturnity, and often hidden beneath a cloud of pipe smoke, Ron had a profound impact on a generation of medical students and was a marvellous mentor of young physicians and laboratory personnel.

After his first marriage ended, Ron married Jo Cornish. They built a wonderful mud brick house in Eltham overlooking the Yarra River. With Ron’s craftsmanship and Jo’s cooking and decorative flair, their home became a haven for their host of friends.

Some time after his retirement, Ron began to develop signs of the debilitating neurological disease which was to claim his life. He became increasingly immobile and was forced to give up most of the pleasures that sustained him. Eventually, confined to his favourite chair and in the loving presence of Jo and his children Kate, Eric, Michael and David, he continued with calm and dignity to receive a stream of visitors until his death on 13 June 2009.

Ian D Gust, Edwina J Wright and Suzanne M Crowe