



David Geraint James

Internationally acclaimed specialist in sarcoidosis. Born on Jan 22, 1922, in Treherbert, UK, he died on Oct 22, 2010, in London, UK.

As many doctors will testify, an early encounter with an inspiring figure can engender a lifetime preoccupation with a particular disorder. It was sarcoidosis that caught and held David (Gerry) James's attention; the man who introduced him to it was Professor John Scadding, renowned specialist in respiratory medicine at what was then, in the late 1940s, the Brompton Chest Hospital in London, UK. The features of James's career that were soon to emerge as so distinctive were the extent to which he not only acted as a focal point for others who shared his enthusiasm, but acquired an international reputation while so doing.

James trained at Cambridge University and London's Middlesex Hospital, where his final clinical year coincided with the wartime blitz on the city. With his first house jobs completed he joined the Royal Navy and served as doctor to a small fleet of vessels sweeping the English Channel for mines. It was on demobilisation and his return to London that he went to work for Scadding at the Brompton. At this hospital and also at another in London, the Hammersmith, Scadding had accumulated a number of patients with sarcoidosis, and he instilled in James his own interest in the disorder. On the personal level too the Hammersmith Hospital had something to offer James: another young doctor called Shelia Sherlock, later to establish an international reputation of her own in hepatology. They married in 1951.

8 years later James was appointed consultant physician at London's Royal Northern Hospital. Within months he had

started the world's first properly organised sarcoidosis clinic. Here he encouraged clinicians, pathologists, epidemiologists, and radiologists to collaborate in attempts to reach a better understanding of the disease. For three decades these clinics were what a couple of James's sometime colleagues, Professors Alimuddin Zumla and Om Sharma, have described as "a Mecca for international sarcoidologists". They came for three reasons, according to Zumla, now professor of infectious diseases and international health at University College, London. The first was simply a question of numbers. Clinics devoted to sarcoidosis were exceptional, and James soon began to receive referrals from all over the country, especially of patients with intractable disease. Specialists had an unrivalled opportunity to encounter a whole range of patients with sarcoidosis in one place. Then there was James's unrivalled experience in treating these patients; he ran a number of drug trials from the clinic. Finally, there was the man himself. "Gerry was an excellent teacher," says Zumla. "If you listened to his lectures you would never forget them. He had a way of imparting knowledge that was special."

Why the fascination with this particular disease? "It was the mystery, the enigma", according to Zumla. "Gerry liked challenges." When he first became interested in sarcoidosis it was viewed as a rare chronic disease of unknown aetiology. In the course of his career James did much to unravel its pathophysiology and pathogenesis. He started by classifying the disease into its different types and treating them accordingly. Then he investigated the immunology of the illness. "He didn't have a well-funded lab", says Sharma, who spent 3 years with James in the 1960s before going to the University of Southern California where he is now a professor of medicine. "But he had a knack of working with people in other specialties." Sharma recalls that whenever he needed access to expertise not available at the Royal Northern, James always knew the right person with whom to collaborate.

Zumla first met James when he began working for him as a registrar in 1984, and went on to become a friend. He speaks of his old boss with deep affection. "He was a kind-hearted, selfless, loving, and gentle soul—but one who could be firm with the people he was teaching to be sure they focused on what they were doing and got the most out of it. He was full of praise. He supported and encouraged. He reassured patients. They called him the 'King of Sarcoid'." In 1958, James organised the first ever international conference on sarcoidosis at the Brompton Hospital, which led to the formation of the World Association of Sarcoidosis and other Granulomatous Disorders (WASOG). James became its founder President. In 1999, James and Zumla co-edited *The Granulomatous Disorders* that rapidly became a standard text. It will continue to serve as one of his more tangible memorials. James is survived by two daughters.

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