

OBITUARY

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing, on 6 February 2006, of Dr Keith Edward Halnan, MD FRSE. As the Chairman of the Hong Kong Government Working Party on Postgraduate Medical Education and Training, Dr Halnan was instrumental in the formation of the Hong Kong Academy of Medicine, and indeed, the very professional environment in which we serve today.

In 1939, only 11 days into World War II, the 19-year-old Keith Halnan and his family survived a German U-boat attack on his passenger boat. After completing his studies in Natural Sciences at Cambridge University, he joined the British Army and was involved in some of the war's fiercest battles in the Indian and Burmese theatres. Having seen the horrors of war, he resolved to take up medicine in order "to make more of a difference".

Dr Halnan trained in radiotherapy in London and Manchester, before moving to Glasgow in 1967 where he helped to found what is now the Beatson Cancer Centre. For his work in Scotland, Dr Halnan was awarded the Fellowship of the Royal Society of Edinburgh. His final clinical post was Director of the Department of Clinical Oncology at the Royal Postgraduate Medical School, London, a position in which he served until 1985.

In 1986, Dr Halnan was selected to serve as Chairman of the Hong Kong Government Working Party. Dr Halnan was well known to the then Deputy Director of Medical



Dr Keith E Halnan (1920-2006)

and Health Services, Dr Rudy Khoo, who was himself a radiotherapist. Prompted to "sever the umbilical cord with the Royal Colleges" by 1997, the Working Party laboured swiftly to produce its interim report in 1987, followed by the final report in 1988.

Dr Halnan retired to Hampton, near London. He is survived by his wife, Margaret, and three daughters.

Dr Halnan's altruistic concern for Hong Kong is readily apparent in his message (box), published in this Journal 10 years ago.

Congratulations from a proud grandfather

All grandfathers, if I may humbly take that role, are proud of their grandchildren, and I am no different. It has been a great pleasure to read the first issues of the new *Hong Kong Medical Journal*. The editors, the contributors, the President, Council and the whole Academy deserve hearty congratulations.

Might I also give some advice? Paragraph 6.56 of the 1988 government report highlighted the need for "co-operation and self-sacrifice."¹ Most of us have as our ambition, publication in the *Lancet*, the *New England Journal of Medicine*, or perhaps even *Nature*. All Hong Kong doctors should now be prepared to send their best work to the *Hong Kong Medical Journal*.

Everyone's ambition for the journal should be for it to reach the same stature as the illustrious periodicals mentioned above. That this is not a wildly impossible dream can be deduced from the history of the *New England Journal of Medicine*. The latter began life as the publication of a small local body in the United States of America—the Massachusetts Medical Society—but insisted on the highest standards and came from one of the best medical homes—Boston. The position is analogous to that of Hong Kong in China, having two first class medical schools in a tiny part of the far greater People's Republic of China. Why should the future not be similar?

Any who remain reluctant to commit their cherished offspring to their home journal can only be reminded that if they do not submit their best papers, none that are worthwhile can be expected to come from outside of Hong Kong.

This is quite enough unsolicited advice from an elderly grandfather—perhaps too much—it only remains for me again to send my very best wishes for continued success and for a rapid transition to monthly, and eventually, to weekly publication.

KE Halnan, MD, FRSE

Reference

1. The Hong Kong Government Working Party on Postgraduate Medical Education and Training. Report and Recommendations, October 1988. Hong Kong: Hong Kong Government Printer; 1988.