

Anthony J Smith (1931-2023)

Anthony Josiah (“Tony”) Smith was a clinical pharmacologist who made important contributions to clinical pharmacology and therapeutics internationally.

Tony Smith was born in Birmingham in 1931 and his secondary education was at King Edward VI Grammar School, Five Ways, Birmingham. He went on to study medicine at Wadham College, Oxford, obtaining an intercalated degree in Animal Physiology and then graduating BM BCh in 1955. There, he developed his longstanding interest in hypertension after working as Senior House Officer to the late Sir George Pickering. He went to Sheffield in 1958 to work in general medicine and clinical pharmacology. He also gained experience as a Lecturer, then Senior Lecturer in the University of Lagos Medical School, Lagos, Nigeria (1963-65) before returning to Sheffield. He was subsequently appointed Senior Lecturer in Pharmacology and Therapeutics, honorary consultant physician, and associate in medicine in Sheffield, where he worked until he and his family moved to Australia in 1978.

Tony published widely on a range of topics. The first scientific publication on which he was an author was in 1959 when he and colleagues reported the prolonged action of the newly introduced antihypertensive drug, guanethidine (*Lancet* 1959; ii: 1044-1048). Further studies on the mechanism of action and adverse effects with this agent, on diuretics and other compounds and their place in in the management of hypertension followed. His first publication on rational prescribing concerned antibiotic policies in the developing world (*European Journal of Clinical Pharmacology* 1991; 41:85-87). He and colleagues concluded the paper by urging clinical pharmacologists to “*be involved in the urgent task of examining drug use in the real world and adding our weight to those trying to improve things.*” He followed his own advice and applied his knowledge of pharmacology to practical therapeutic issues faced by numerous healthcare systems internationally. With colleagues, he also published on the epidemiology and treatment of poisoning and on aspects of medical education, including how to improve the teaching of safe and effective prescribing practices.

In 1978, he was appointed to the post of Foundation Professor of Clinical Pharmacology, at the University of Newcastle, New South Wales (NSW), Australia, where he spent the rest of his career. In Newcastle, he contributed importantly to the launch of Australia’s first problem-based medical undergraduate curriculum and the establishment of the first Australian entry program for indigenous medical students. Tony was responsible for much of the work that led to the problem-based prescribing curriculum involving all Australian medical schools in the 1980s. His approach was also adopted by the World Health Organization (WHO) in its web-based prescribing curriculum (*Brit J clin Pharmacol* 2006; 62: 653-9). Tony’s commitment to rational drug use internationally led to the Discipline of Clinical Pharmacology at the University of Newcastle being established as a WHO

Collaborating Centre in 1994. On his retirement from the university in 1997, he was appointed Professor Emeritus of Clinical Pharmacology.

An early enthusiastic advocate for the potential of clinical pharmacology to improve the health of nations, he called for Australia to develop a national medicines policy (*Medical Journal of Australia* 1992; 156: 299-300). He then chaired the resulting national Pharmacological Health and Rational Use of Medicines Committee which subsequently led to the establishment of the Australian National Prescribing Service. He was a member of the WHO Expert Advisory Panel on Drug Policies and Management. He made more than 40 consultancy visits to share his expertise with other international centres, many of which had no access to in-house clinical pharmacologists. He contributed to the WHO Essential Medicines List initiative and to the development of policies for rational medicines use internationally. He also chaired the WHO working Group on the psychosocially assisted pharmacological treatment of opioid dependence and contributed to the resulting guidelines.

Tony became a BPS member in 1970 and was soon active in the Society. He was Clinical Section Secretary for two years until his move to Australia. As a member of the editorial board of British Journal of Clinical Pharmacology (BJCP) from 1975 to 1977, he was part of the team which delivered the successful launch of our “green journal.” Later, he was a member of the BJCP’s International Editorial Board (2004-11). He was delighted to be appointed an Honorary Fellow of the Society in 2021 in recognition of his sustained excellence and leadership in science, healthcare, and public service. His contribution to clinical pharmacology was also recognised in Australia by the award of Membership of the Order of Australia (AM) in the Queen’s Birthday Honours List of 2014 for “*significant service to medicine as a clinical pharmacologist, and to regulation and quality use of medicines*”.

In retirement, he continued to enjoy music and bushwalking. He died in December 2023 at the age of 92. Those who met or worked with him will remember a warm, generous, and approachable person who always showed courtesy, honesty, integrity, and humanity. He had a restless curiosity for knowledge, and inspired others to strive for excellence. He was sustained greatly by his Christian faith. His beloved wife Jan (née Janet Morris), their children Robert, Steve, Peter, and Cate, seventeen grandchildren and eight great grandchildren, were also a great source of joy to him.

PA Routledge (contributions by Dr Robert Smith and Professor David A Henry)