

Obituaries

Obituaries should be submitted by email to Jonathan Coe at jonathan.coe@nature.com.

All submitted obituaries should be 450 words maximum in length (apart from obituaries for past presidents of the BDA where the length should be 800 words).

Content of the obituary is down to the individual author, and the approval of the family should be given for the obituary prior to submission to the *BDJ*.



Martin Downer

1931–2017

Martin Downer who died on 28 April 2017 had a long and distinguished career. He qualified in dentistry at the University of Liverpool in 1958 and gained a Diploma in Dental Public Health in 1969. In 1970 he was appointed Research Fellow in Dental Health, University of Manchester, where he conducted a randomised controlled trial of a supervised school-based fluoride intervention and for his PhD (1974) he established the validity of caries diagnosis into dentine; a topic in which he retained a long-standing interest. In 1974 he was appointed Salford Area Dental Officer and honorary senior lecturer at the University of Manchester. Martin was also a talented computer programmer and, writing in Fortran 1V, he developed two programmes for the analysis of caries clinical trials and the conduct of

treatment needs studies, during this time, both of which were used well into the 1980s.

In 1979 Martin was appointed Chief Dental Officer in the Scottish Home and Health Department and Honorary Senior Lecturer in the University of Edinburgh and the University of Dundee. In 1983 he was appointed Chief Dental Officer for England. He gained his Doctor of Dental Surgery in 1989 (University of Manchester while CDO). In 1990, as was the custom, Martin retired from the civil service aged 60 and took up the post of Professor of Dental Health Policy at the Eastman, from which he retired in 1996.

Among his other activities he held posts of visiting lecturer/professor in eleven universities overseas. He was a founder member of the British Association for the Study of Community Dentistry (1973) and president of the organisation (1998–1999). He was a founder member of the European Association of Dental Public Health and the International Academy of Oral Oncology. He was a member of the Expert Advisory Panel on oral health for the World Health Organisation (1984–1999), and chairman of the UK working group on screening for

oral cancer (1991–1993). He was awarded the International Association for Dental Research distinguished scientist prize in 2010.

Martin was a past editor of *Community Dental Health* (1993–2002). He had over one hundred publications in peer-reviewed journals including the *British Dental Journal*, *The Lancet*, *Community Dental Health*, and *Oral Oncology*. He contributed chapters to several text books.

Among his hobbies was playing the saxophone. He played in a semi-pro band throughout his student days to fund his social life. He was a member of one of the bands who played at the opening night of The Cavern Club. After graduation he played professionally for a few years, mostly in London clubs. He made several records and even appeared on *Top of the Pops*. In his retirement he studied for an MA in Creative Writing at Bath Spa University and published several novels and short stories. He was married for 56 years and had four daughters and thirteen grandchildren. He is badly missed by both his colleagues and family for his conviviality, kindness and zest for life.

Anne Downer & Caroline Drugan



The BDA Benevolent Fund has been working for over 130 years to ensure that no dentist is unsupported in times of need or crisis. Our ultimate aim is to reach more people in need. We need dentists in all areas of the UK to help spread the word.

If you know someone who is finding it hard to cope, make sure they know about the BDA Benevolent Fund. If we can help, we will. Share, like and keep up to date with our efforts on our Facebook page: [facebook.com/bdabenevolentfund/](https://www.facebook.com/bdabenevolentfund/)