



Verna Wright 1928-1998

Rheumatologist

Verna Wright began studying veterinary science at Liverpool University but switched to medicine and after qualifying, took a post at Stoke Mandeville Hospital where his interest in Rheumatology developed.

He came to Leeds in 1956 as research assistant to Professor Hartfall who had pioneered the use of injectable gold for the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis in Great Britain. He then moved to Johns Hopkins Hospital Baltimore and developed his interest in joint lubrication as well as bioengineering and the development of artificial joints.

On his return to Leeds he was appointed lecturer then senior lecturer and finally, in 1970 to a personal Chair in Rheumatology. This was in recognition of his pioneering work describing and defining the different elements then believed to be part of rheumatoid arthritis and which were indeed separated on immunological and genetic grounds over his lifetime.

Under his guidance the Rheumatology department continued to flourish, expanding into bioengineering, rehabilitation then clinical pharmacology whilst still retaining a foothold in clinical medicine.

He was the author of over 1,000 publications and 1,200 communications, as well as many books. He played an important role in Rheumatology nationally as an advisor to the Chief Medical Officer and as a member of the Committee on Safety of Medicines. He was President of the British Association for Rheumatology and Rehabilitation and formed the British Society for Rheumatology in 1984. For many years he held key positions with the Arthritis and Rheumatism Council, becoming chair of the standing committee on academic development and research and masterminding the successful development of academic Rheumatology throughout the country.

