

Obituary: Dr. Martin Rowan

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28 November 2005

I first met Martin in 1979 when I was the Meeting/Scientific Secretary for the Annual General Meeting of the British Society of Haematology.

That year the meeting was held in the highlands of Scotland in Avimore and I distinctly remember Martin wearing a kilt and some strong brogues and going out for a long walk over the hills with two or three colleagues.

At that time I immediately found him to be a very sociable and friendly character who in particular loved those favourite Scottish pursuits, walking in the highlands and drinking a glass or two of whisky before retiring to bed in the evening.

The next time I met Martin was in the early 1980's after I had been appointed as a Consultant Haematologist at the Middlesex Hospital Medical School. At that time, my senior consultant colleagues, Professor JW Stewart and Dr. P Crossland-Taylor had a long standing research interest in the development and testing of automated blood cell counters. It was because of this interest that I once again met Martin. He was at this time a consultant haematologist in Glasgow and was also very interested in the development and usefulness of new automated blood cell counters and the various parameters they could produce. Indeed, I remember distinctly a learned monograph he published in the mid 1980's on the usefulness and problems associated with measurement of the platelet cell volume (PCV), equivalent in a way to the red cell MCV.

During the 70's and 80's Martin developed an international reputation in standardisation and assessment of a variety of laboratory haematological parameters and I believe was one of the founder members the ICSH (International Committee for Standardisation in Haematology). In the early 1990's Martin became interested in linking several automated blood cell counters with the latest IT facilities and producing automated reports. My personal association with Sysmex both in Japan, UK and Europe developed in the early 1990's and at that time we both became involved in the development of new parameters for blood cell counters and also the development of coagulometers and various coagulation reagents. We frequently met whilst speaking at various international meetings, particularly on automated blood cell counters and potential new parameters, such as reticulocytes, reticulocyte fractions and the then theoretical development of an immature platelet fraction or platelet reticulocytes. Martin often stimulated discussion on the way ahead and so developed our common interests and research input in Sysmex's future analyser programmes.

Martin had a very pleasant manner and was always approachable and could discuss problems and possible snags on any specific technique in a lucid and clear-cut fashion. Politically he was very astute and saw the importance of being involved in the EU and became Chairperson of the ELM (European Laboratory Medicine) group. In his latter years, after retiring as a Consultant Haematologist, he acted as the Senior

Medical/Scientific Advisor to Sysmex Europe and would often visit our laboratory facility at University College London and positively help us with the progress of various evaluations. He was also a keen supporter of the new fledgling society the International Society of Laboratory Haematology (ISLH).

I particularly miss him for his wise counsel, usually in the evenings whilst he was having a glass of whisky. Rumour has it that he always travelled with a small bottle of whisky in his case and used this to clean his teeth in various foreign countries where the water supply may not entirely have been completely pure! Even after he developed a serious illness, he continued to travel around the world, was always actively reading and thinking about new advances, particularly with respect to automated blood cell counters and keeping in touch with numerous international colleagues.

His work in international standardisation and the collaborative work he developed with many senior international colleagues such as Dr. Lewis, Dr. England, Dr. Houwen, Dr. Thom, Dr. Van Asseldef and Dr. Bull is really his main legacy to haematology.

Sadly the younger haematologists coming along now are more interested in clinical work and the skills, logic and sound statistical analysis of data which was Martin's forte have sadly been lost.

