

'A rising star in the world of vascular surgery'

A tribute in the British Medical Journal by Professor Averil Mansfield*

Geoffrey Gilling-Smith was a rising star in the world of vascular surgery. He was a consultant surgeon in Liverpool when he died, and his influence had spread well beyond the UK's boundaries. His particular expertise within vascular surgery was the endovascular treatment of arterial disease, and in particular aortic aneurysms.

His logical approach was matched by the clarity of his arguments and vision. He was able to see the next steps and to persuade others of their importance. He was well received throughout the world and in particular in the influential North American meetings, where he was a respected and articulate speaker.

He was born on 15 November 1955 at the old St George's Hospital, Hyde Park Corner. His mother spoke French and so he was bilingual. When he was 11 his aortic coarctation was repaired by Charles Drew at the Westminster Hospital, and he was aware that his bicuspid aortic valve might eventually lead to problems. Indeed, it led to his premature death.

As a child he asked difficult questions, and this remained a characteristic of his professional life. He was prepared to challenge, to question, and to promote change.

He had broad interests outside medicine, and these made him splendid company. They included music, especially jazz, and he played the saxophone and other instruments. He loved fast vehicles, particularly powerful motor bikes. He won a scholarship to Epsom College, where he captained the shooting team, and he

started to paint. He graduated from London University at Charing Cross and did his senior registrar training at St Mary's. He became a consultant in Liverpool at the Royal Liverpool Hospital, and any misgivings he had about leaving the south were quickly dispelled in the career progress which followed.

He became a member of the council of the Vascular Society and was greatly involved in training and education.

Above all else, he developed the understanding of the benefits and limitations of endovascular surgery, coining the word (eventually accepted) endotension. He particularly drew the attention of the vascular and trauma surgeons to the benefits of endovascular repair for the contained rupture of the thoracic aorta. He was a clear and entertaining speaker who was prepared to be provocative on the basis of personal observations and understanding.

He leaves a wife, Lynda; two children; a sister (also a doctor); and his parents.

Consultant surgeon Royal Liverpool Hospital (b 1955; q Charing Cross Hospital, London, 1980; FRCSEng, FRCSEd, MS), died from aortic valve disease on 17 January 2010.

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*Averil Mansfield was Consultant General Surgeon at the Royal Liverpool Hospital. She became Director of The Academic Surgical Unit and Professor of Vascular Surgery at St Mary's / Imperial College in 1993. She was President of the BMA from 2009-10 and Chairman of the Stroke Association from 2003-08.

‘He cared deeply about his patients’

A tribute in the Official Journal of the International Society of Vascular Surgery

IN MEMORIAM

Geoffrey L. Gilling-Smith, MD (1955–2010)

The global vascular community is greatly saddened by the untimely loss of one of its rising stars, Geoffrey Gilling-Smith, a man with exceptional talents and a strong personality.

Although Geoff worked as a consultant in vascular surgery at the Royal Liverpool Hospital in the United Kingdom, his innovative presentations and provocative writings greatly influenced his vascular colleagues throughout Europe, the United States, and the world.

Geoff had a brilliant mind that was able to formulate important original concepts that others had missed and then express and support them in a clear, logical, and convincing fashion. He was exceptionally creative and innovative. He was a captivating speaker and a superb debater with an incisive wit. Geoff, who was an Associate Editor of *Vascular*, was quick to champion new and original ideas and then to get others to embrace them. He was clearly an organizer and a leader in every way. He was not afraid to express his views even if they were unpopular and provocative to some.

In addition, Geoff was articulate, gregarious, charismatic, and fun for others to be around. He had a zest for life and enjoyed it in many ways. He was an accomplished sailor, marksman, musician, and Formula I racer.



Figure 1. Dr. Gilling-Smith

Geoff Gilling-Smith was also a very warm-hearted man who cared deeply about his patients and his friends, as they cared for him. All of them regarded him as a treasured individual whose passing is viewed as a great tragedy. It is certainly a major loss to vascular surgery and vascular specialists everywhere.

Geoff, you have greatly enriched the lives of many. You will be sorely missed, deeply loved, and never forgotten.

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