

*Frank Mansfield MA, MB
ChB, MRCP, FRACGP,
Dip Obst RCOG*

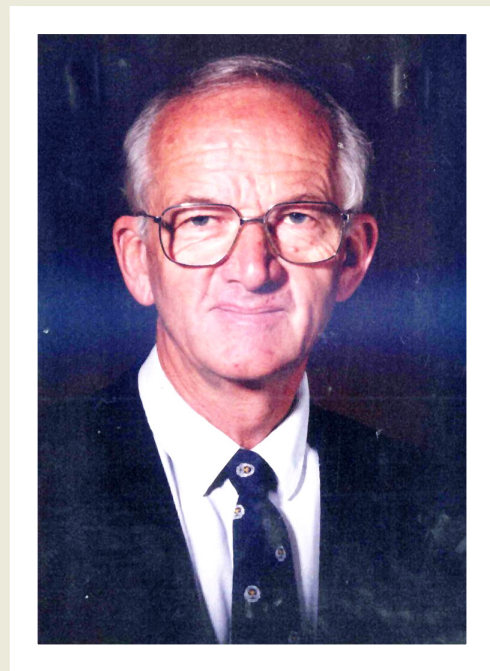
GP and Medical Educator

Born: Bristol, 6 March 1931

Died: Gooseberry Hill, 20 August 2014

Dr Frank Mansfield was a respected member and stalwart of The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) between 1970–2013. He was Chair and Secretary of the WA Faculty and a foundation medical educator of its vocational training program. He was officially recognised as a WA Faculty Legend in 2008.

Frank Mansfield was best known as a medical educator and an inspiring teacher who was an Australian pioneer of vocational training and education for medical graduates who wished to enter general practice. Many young GPs in WA, and lots of older GPs as well, had their careers influenced, for the good, by Frank. He was well-versed in educational theory and technique and his friendly and benevolent persona made learners comfortable and ready to learn. The principles and processes Frank and his colleagues developed in the early 1970s are the bases of general practice registrar education that still applies today.



He also taught medical students at the Department of General Practice at the University of Western Australia (UWA). In 1990, he was enticed to work full-time in the department and took on the role of Head of Department from 1993–95 before retiring in 1996. During this time he negotiated the establishment of the Fremantle Hospital General Practice. He was also called upon to resolve disputes about the direction of the Department and the division of its small resources. Frank

negotiated both these minefields with his usual honesty and interpersonal skills. He described the experience as a ‘wake-up call for my naïveté that made me realise that I had better things to do than to immerse myself into the arenas of hospital and university politics’.

After retirement he returned to UWA as a casual teacher of undergraduate medical students and continued until early 2014. In 2008, when he was 76 years old, medical students nominated him as the best clinical teacher in the Faculty of Medicine. UWA also appointed him to the adjunct position of Clinical Associate Professor, a position he held until mid-2014.

His educational interests also extended to use of the media where, with well-known medical historian Dr Jim Leavesley, he co-hosted a weekly program called ‘Ask the Doctor’. This was a feature of the ABC’s 6WF morning program throughout the 1980s.

The RACGP began in 1958 and held its first examinations for Membership in 1968. Frank joined that year and sat and passed the examination in 1970. He was elected to the Board of the WA Faculty and served as its Secretary and as Chair from 1979–80.

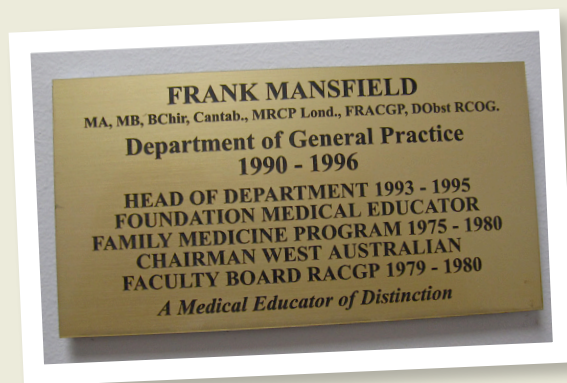
He retired from the Board but continued to assist the WA Faculty and its secretariat as an examiner and in many other ways. In 2008, Faculty staff selected him for the Faculty Legend Award.

UK Years

Frank was brought up with an older brother in Chipping Sodbury, a Gloucestershire market town near Bristol, UK. His father was an accountant and died from tuberculosis during his mother’s pregnancy with him.

He won a scholarship to Bristol Grammar School, which was founded in 1532. His teachers encouraged him to study ‘Classics’, with a view of going to Cambridge or Oxford. He resolutely defied the school as he wished to study medicine and chose to follow the science curriculum. He won a scholarship to Caius College at Cambridge where he studied his pre-clinical subjects. His clinical studies and residency years were undertaken at Guy’s Hospital, London.

Frank completed two years of military service in Aden, Yemen, before returning to a position at Croydon Hospital. There, he studied and passed the difficult examination for Membership of the Royal College of Physicians of London which qualified him to be a specialist. However, he wanted to be a GP and joined a practice in Surrey, South East of England. Frank became disillusioned with the state of general practice in the UK and in 1965, migrated to Western Australia.



GP WA

Frank worked in Collie, Bunbury and between 1974–2003, was a part-time GP at the highly regarded Stirk General Practice in Kalamunda, delivering babies and sharing in the after-hours roster. He was a much loved and admired GP.

Frank personified the motto of the RACGP ‘Cum Scientia Caritas’, scientific knowledge applied with tender loving care. He was a good listener, thorough and clinically astute and never seemed rushed for time. Long before others were doing so, Frank was recognising and teaching that detecting the emotional problem behind the physical one was an important part of diagnosis. Long before it was fashionable, he developed ‘patient management care plans’ with the consent and involvement of his patients.

Frank never compromised working for the best interests of his patients, respecting confidentiality and never judging them, or anyone else, without knowing all aspects of their story. He was a fitting recipient for the inaugural Peter Anderton Memorial Award for excellence in general practice in 2000.

Carol

During his time as a junior doctor at Guy’s Hospital, he met his future wife, Carol, while she was a nurse at the hospital. This was the beginning of a 55-year romance. Frank Mansfield resplendent in his British Army Medical Corps’ officer’s uniform when he married Carol Turner the following year. When he was posted to Aden, Carol joined him and worked in the British Army Hospital for families of Arab soldiers.

Carol was tolerant of the inconveniences of being a GP’s wife and supported all of Frank’s career choices. She cared for him at home during the difficult years of his long-last illness.

Frank was much more than just a doctor. He was a highly civilised human being with a quirky sense of humour. An elderly patient gave Frank a budgerigar to take home for his children. Unfortunately, a cat caught it and enjoyed the meal. The next time the patient consulted him, she asked how the family enjoyed the budgie. With a straight face, Frank replied, ‘It went down very well’.

He was immensely proud of his family and shared many activities with them. Frank and Carol had a wide circle of friends and broad interests that included bird watching, tai chi, gardening, volunteering at the State Herbarium, the restoration of Falls Farm and orienteering. At the age 80, Frank even started to learn the cello.

Frank Mansfield is survived by his wife, Carol and daughters, Jane, Sally and Cate.

Drs Howard Watts, Ann Ten Seldam, Max Kamien