

Giovanni Berlinguer

Doctor, politician, and environmentalist

Giovanni Berlinguer (b 1924; q University of Rome 1958), d 6 April 2015

A eulogy published on Science Network (*Scienza in rete*) after the death of Giovanni Berlinguer describes him as a “doctor and hygienist by training, politician by conviction, and humanist by nature,” and as someone who “always confronted the dramatic realities of life: illness, death, war, unemployment, and deprivation.”¹

Berlinguer chose to pursue a career in academic medicine, but the explanation he gave as to why he had become a politician implied that choice had had little to do with it: politics ran in the blood, starting with his grandfather Enrico, he said.

His father Mario and cousins Luigi and Sergio followed in Enrico's footsteps, while his elder brother, Enrico junior, led the Italian Communist Party for 12 years until his death in 1984. “Everyone was involved in politics. What else could I have done? Stay cooped up at home?” he once proclaimed.

Berlinguer's political beliefs were rooted in Marxist philosophy. He first made a name for himself as the president of the International Union of Students from 1949 to 1953. He presided over more than 100 affiliated organisations with more than 5 million members—not all of them communist—against the backdrop of the cold war. He was elected to the Italian Chamber of Deputies in 1972 and subsequently to the Senate of the Republic in 1983 for the Italian Communist Party, where he drove through a string of health, social, and welfare reforms—including the closure of mental health asylums in Italy—during his period in office, which ended in 1992.

Most notably, Berlinguer spearheaded his country's first national health plan (*Servizio Sanitario Nazionale*). In 1978 universal coverage funded by taxation replaced disjointed healthcare services governed by a fragmented and inequitable insurance system.

Berlinguer was also one of the founders of Legambiente, Italy's leading environmental organisation. As a member of the European Parliament in Strasbourg—an office he held from 2004 until 2009—he advanced important proposals on climate change and served on the commission on environment and health, as well as the commission on culture, education, and information.



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The Italian president, Sergio Mattarella, described Berlinguer as a man of shining integrity and character. “A highly respected doctor, he knew how to combine civic passion, scientific rigour, and a profound humanity throughout his long career,” Mattarella wrote in a message to Berlinguer's family.

Vicente Navarro, first president of the International Association of Health Policy, which Berlinguer co-founded with him, said he “combined a very strong commitment to justice and democracy, on the one hand, with a great demand for rigour on the other, a combination that made him extremely effective.”

Berlinguer believed that everyone had a right to health, equality, and social justice, and saw science as a civilising force, which along with politics should be pressed into service for the common good. He is credited with helping to forge the concept of what is now known as the social determinants of health, and from 2005 to 2008 he was a member of the World Health Organization's dedicated commission on this topic. Its chair, Michael Marmot, described Berlinguer as a “remarkable colleague,” who was “at once charming, insightful, knowledgeable, sincere, committed—all enlivened by an impish sense of humour.”

Berlinguer was a strong advocate of women's rights to abortion in Italy, a predominantly Catholic country. He frequently travelled to Latin America as part of his work with the International Association of Health Policy, at a time when many of the countries he visited were in the grip of military juntas fundamentally opposed to the views he espoused.

Until 1999 Berlinguer taught social medicine, and public and occupational health,

initially in his native Sassari and subsequently in Rome. He wrote and co-wrote more than 50 books and reports, the last of which, *Health History: From Privilege to Right*, was published in 2011. One of his first, *Medicine is Sick*, published in 1959, was not only a trenchant critique of the Italian healthcare system, but also foresaw what would become the guiding principles of subsequent reform: disease prevention, the impact of environment and work on health, and inequitable access to care.

Among the many influential tomes reflecting his areas of expertise and interests was a historical and cultural appreciation of fleas (*Imiei pulci*), in which he suggested that these critters had decided the fate of many more battles than had Caesar, Hannibal, or Napoleon.

Throughout his life Berlinguer concerned himself with ethics, and used his presidency of the Italian National Bioethics Committee to shift its focus to the ethics of daily life—diagnosis, treatment, and prevention. One of his most important and enduring ethical legacies was the report he drafted with Leo De Castro for UNESCO's international bioethics committee. It became the basis for the Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights in 2005, encompassing the entire human lifespan.

Berlinguer was honoured with the Grand Cross of the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic in 1999, and with the gold medal for services to culture and the arts in 2001. Predeceased by his wife, Giulia, in 2014, he leaves three children.

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Peter Reid Duncan



Consultant physician (b 1919; q Manchester 1943; MD, FRCP), d 23 October 2014.

Peter Reid Duncan qualified during the war and served in the Royal Army Medical Corps, on the hospital ship HMHS *Tairea* between Burma and India. He received an MD with commendation for his work—“Of Mice and Men”—on the epidemiology of viral lymphocytic choriomeningitis on the backstreets of Manchester. He helped develop Victoria Hospital into a comprehensive centre, but he was perhaps most proud of the unit for younger patients with disabilities that he established to provide short term relief for families. In retirement, he enjoyed golf, poetry (especially Wordsworth), and the Lakes. He had a long and happy marriage to Kathleen. He leaves four children and 14 grandchildren.

John Reid Duncan

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John Frame



Senior lecturer in anatomy University of St Andrews (b 1927; q Glasgow 1949), d 5 July 2014.

A good judge of character, John Frame took great pleasure in being warden of Andrew Melville Hall of Residence, a position he held for many years. He undertook occasional sessional work as a general practitioner at the student health service alongside his friend, Inglis Lamont. As admissions officer for the medical school he had liberty to make

special allowances with regard to entry requirements—a policy that permitted not a few leading luminaries in the medical world to pursue their vocations. A contented man, John was able to a certain extent to diffuse that attribute to those who knew him. His contentment stemmed from his strong Christian faith. He leaves his wife, Irene; a daughter; and two brothers (also doctors).

Keith Buchan, William Frame

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Philip Carlton Heal



Former general practitioner Exeter (born 1932; qualified St John's College Cambridge/St Thomas' Hospital London 1957), d 7 April 2015.

Philip Carlton Heal did three years of national service, running a small hospital in Jinga, Uganda, with his wife, Diana. On his return he trained as an anaesthetist at Lambeth Hospital London before joining his parents in general practice in Exeter. He took a lead role in the merging of several practices to form the St Thomas Health Centre in Exeter, where he was a partner. Until he retired in 1992, he also worked part time as an anaesthetist. After retiring from general practice he worked at the hospice in Exeter for several years. He was a passionate sailor, walker, and painter of watercolours. He leaves Diana, three children, and 11 grandchildren.

Andrew Heal

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Paula Murphy

Consultant radiologist Bristol Royal Infirmary (b 1953; q Dublin 1977; FRCR, MRCP, FFR (RCSI)), d 12 March 2015.

Paula Murphy started as a fellow in cardiovascular radiology in the



Bristol Royal Infirmary in 1987 and then became a clinical lecturer at the University of Bristol. She was appointed consultant radiologist in 1991 and worked in that capacity during her entire career. Paula specialised in all forms of cardiovascular radiology and was the senior vascular interventionist in Bristol for many years. She introduced and developed many new interventional and imaging techniques and trained many radiologists who now practise in Bristol, the south west, and beyond. Paula had been looking forward to a holiday in Vietnam but collapsed and died unexpectedly soon after she arrived there. She leaves three brothers, many nieces and nephews, and countless friends.

Peter Wilde

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Arthur T Porter

Physician (b 1956; q Cambridge 1980), d 30 June 2015.

In 2005 Arthur T Porter was headhunted to supervise the construction of a new superhospital in Montreal, where his organisational skills were fully tested. He received many honours, and the hospital opened on time earlier this year, but he was not there to take the glory. In 2011 he was accused of taking a bribe, and the police (in 2013) issued an Interpol warrant for his arrest. This happened just over two years ago, while he was in transit through Panama City airport. At that time he had already been diagnosed with lung cancer. He spent the last two years of his life in the La Joya prison in the Darien Gap, but was eventually transferred to hospital. He leaves his wife, Pamela, and four daughters.

Karol Sikora

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Elsie Ritch (Guglick)

Former anaesthesiologist (b 1924; q St Andrews 1946), d 17 May 2015.

In 1951 Elsie Ritch, a qualified obstetrician, emigrated to Canada from Scotland. She enlisted in the Canadian Army and in September 1952 was posted to Whitehorse. During her time with the army she qualified in anaesthesia and in 1957 received her Canadian and American Board certifications. She retired 30 years later as head of anaesthesiology at the Old Grace Hospital. Predeceased by her husband, Joe Guglick, she leaves four children, seven grandchildren; five great grandchildren; and her faithful pet, Justin.

The Ritch Family

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Vanessa Mary Wright



Former consultant paediatric surgeon (b 1943; q University College London 1967; FRCS, FRACS), d 12 June 2015.

After surgical training in London and Melbourne, Australia, Vanessa Mary Wright was appointed consultant surgeon at Queen Elizabeth Hospital for Children in Hackney in 1977. Ten years later, she was invited back to her alma mater to be the first specialist paediatric surgeon at University College London Hospital. Her resilience was tested in the 1990s when the east London department was asked to move to the Royal London Hospital, Whitechapel, before the new facilities were built. Alongside her formidable clinical and administrative duties, Vanessa was chair of the board of examiners for the intercollegiate fellowship for three very effective years. Her well earned retirement was spent in East Sussex, renovating a farmhouse, developing a beautiful garden, and enjoying opera at nearby Glyndebourne.

David Drake

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