



Tribute by Professor Jim Ryan

On behalf of the Worshipful Society of Apothecaries of
London

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The Royal Army Medical Corps

Tribute read at Dr Leslie Payne's Memorial Service at
The Church of St Andrew by the Wardrobe, London
on 27 September 2018

Our dear friend and academic colleague Dr Leslie David Payne died peacefully on 24th May 2018 from an illness bravely borne. The RAMC, the wider military medical and the security service community here and in the United States lost an outstanding friend and gifted medical scientist. Since the early 1970s Leslie had laboured long and hard as The Ballistic and Blast Archivist to the Department of Military Surgery at RAM College Millbank.

This was unpaid work carried out in addition to managing his busy dental practice. At the same time he was discretely advising security agencies in the United Kingdom. His areas of particular interest and expertise included blast biophysics and pathophysiology, penetrating civilian and military ballistic injury. Leslie was also a noted expert on stab injury and on unarmed combat and in these areas he worked closely with the London Metropolitan Police and the Association of Chief Police Officers of the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland.

Few were privileged to know the real Leslie. To those who knew him only slightly he presented as a quiet, modest and unassuming man – and indeed he was, but there was also much more to him. One of us fell into this trap. In 1990 Jim Ryan was Joint Professors of Military Surgery and on walking into the department office late one evening found Leslie sitting on a desk with the old 1905 Chubb safe open and the area littered with classified documents. On reporting this to the General George Cowan L/RAMC the following morning the General smiled and said “Jim, Dr Payne’s security clearance is greater than yours and mine combined - incidentally most of the classified papers lying on the desk were probably his anyway”. Around this time one of Leslie’s discrete security service colleagues told Janet “He had a foot in every door”.

Most of his greatest achievements were never publicly known and probably never will be. However, a few of his special achievements can be shared openly. The first relates to the establishment of the Diploma in the Medical Care of Catastrophes (DMCC), taught and examined at the Worshipful Society of Apothecaries of London. Few will know of Leslie’s central role in establishing the DMCC. In 1993 the Dean and Professors at the Royal Army Medical College were seeking a means of having the then Postgraduate Medical Officers Introductory Course recognised academically by the Royal Colleges and Universities. Because of the multidisciplinary nature of the course no Royal College or University would agree. Leslie, an Apothecary of long standing, was working in the Department of Military Surgery at the time and he suggested the Dean and Joint Professors should approach the then Master and Members of Court at the Society of Apothecaries to see if they could help. With Leslie taking the lead the RAM College senior academics met with the Master and Members of Court early in 1993 and they agreed to establish the diploma. In less than a year the DMCC was up and running with the first examination being held in the autumn of 1994. The DMCC is the jewel in the crown of the Society’s portfolio of diploma examinations and all credit must go to Dr Payne.

The second achievement relates to the rescue of rare medical publications. When the Royal Army Medical College on Millbank (Westminster) closed in 1999, rare and important books on ballistics and trauma were dumped in rubbish skips in an act of institutional vandalism. Fortunately Leslie undertook a series of rescue missions to save what he could. This academic rescue became a priceless addition to Leslie's already existing Ballistic Injury Archive. He went on to create a library of journal papers and reports in the areas of ballistic injury, weapon effects and protection, and used his encyclopaedic knowledge of these areas to support and guide defence clinicians and scientists in their research endeavours and higher degrees, and this continued long after the closure of Millbank.

On behalf of the security services, Leslie also managed the Group of Experts on Mitigation Systems (GEMS) conferences, bringing together people from government, academia and industry, and helping to create longstanding research networks and working groups.

It is fitting that materials from Leslie's archive will be housed in the Burnett Library at DMS Whittington for the benefit of future DMS researchers.

We will all remember Leslie's quiet nurturing of a generation of military physicians many of whom have moved on to enjoy stellar careers. He will be long remembered with gratitude, and with sadness that he is no longer here to guide and educate in this very specialised area.

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