

EVANS, DAVID ALLAN PRICE (1927 - 2019), pharmacogeneticist

Name: David Allan Price Evans
Date of birth: 1927
Date of death: 2019
Parent: Owen Evans
Parent: Ellen Evans (née Jones)
Gender: Male
Occupation: pharmacogeneticist
Area of activity: Medicine; Science and Mathematics
Author: D. Ben Rees

David Price Evans was born on 6 March 1927 in Birkenhead, Liverpool, the only son of Owen Evans, a postmaster, and his wife Ellen (née Jones) from Anglesey. Before he started school the family had moved to Llangefni, and they moved again to Flint where he completed his primary education and attended Holywell Grammar School.

He went on to Liverpool University in 1945, and graduated in Biochemistry and Physiology in 1948. He then turned to medicine, graduating MBChB in 1951 and winning numerous academic prizes. He did his military service with the R.A.M.C. 1953-5, mostly in the Far East. He treated the so-called jungle diseases amongst the soldiers and their families in Korea towards the end of the war there, and latterly in Kuala Lumpur during the Malayan troubles. This chapter in his life turned out to be an excellent apprenticeship for him.

He returned to complete his training at the University of Liverpool 1955-58, and submitted a highly regarded M.Sc thesis on the subject of 'Experimental Peptic Ulcer' in 1957. This was the beginning of his career as researcher under the auspices of two of the giants of academic medicine on Merseyside, Henry Cohen (later Lord Cohen of Birkenhead) and Sir Cyril Clarke. At Clarke's suggestion Evans spent a year at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore in 1958, working alongside Victor McKusick in clinical genetics, work which would lead to his Liverpool MD in 1960.

His medical research brought him to the attention of the academic world, particularly in the field of pharmacogenetics. As a result of his findings, he taught and lectured in his specialist field in thirty countries. In 1960, he was appointed lecturer in the Department of Medicine at Liverpool University and as a houseman to Professor Henry Cohen at the Royal Hospital, Liverpool. From, he served as consultant at Broadgreen, Stanley and the Northern Hospitals. He was made Professor of Medicine in 1968, and in 1972 he succeeded Cyril Clarke as Chair and Head of the Department of Medicine and Director of the Nuffield Unit of Medical Genetics.

After eleven years in this key position, he decided to take on a new challenge, and in 1983 he became Director of Medicine at the Riyadh Armed Forces Hospital in Saudi Arabia. This meant serving members of the Saudi royal family. He was solely responsible for the medical side of the hospital, and remained there for nearly a quarter of a century, spending six months of the year in Riyadh and the other six at his home in Allerton, Liverpool. He was involved in planning new buildings for the hospital and developing various perspectives on his research, especially in the field of new drugs to treat hardening of the arteries. It was during his time at Riyadh that he completed his notable book, *Genetic Factors in Drug Therapy*, published by Cambridge University Press in 1993. Over a period of forty years, he contributed numerous papers and articles on medical matters to journals published in England, Wales, Scotland, the USA and many European medical establishments.

He delighted in his Welshness, and he would regularly read Welsh-language periodicals. In 1963, he bought a smallholding called Pen yr Allt, in the parish of Llangristiolus, Anglesey, and would travel there at weekends to attend to the farming needs. Under his careful planning, the smallholding grew to some fifty acres, and his parents took great pleasure in visiting the place on a regular basis. It is no wonder that he took on the bardic name 'Dafydd o Baradwys' (David of Paradise) when he was accepted into the Gorsedd of the National Eisteddfod for his contribution to the Welsh language and Liverpool Welsh community and to medicine.

A member of the Heathfield Road Welsh Chapel, Liverpool, he was most loyal to the cause there; however, like his parents, he decided that his burial service would be held in an Anglican church at Llangristiolus. His generosity towards Bethel Chapel, Liverpool, Llangristiolus church and the Medical Department of Liverpool University was exceptional. He firmly believed that an individual such as himself, having only a small family, should spread his assets in order to help others. He gave three million pounds to the University of Liverpool to sponsor two chairs within the Medical Department, the 'David Price Evans Chair in Medicine' and, in memory of his parents, the 'Owen and Ellen Evans Chair of Oncology'.

His final years were a sad period as he deteriorated mentally and had to be cared for in a nursing home, suffering a major stroke which affected his speech. David Price Evans died at the Royal Hospital, Liverpool on 29 August 2019, and was buried in Llangristiolus cemetery, Anglesey.

Author

D. Ben Rees

Sources

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Personal acquaintance

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