

Medicine and Body Image: Resource Planning for the Poor. A Memoir by Terence Ryan

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It takes courage to disclose all one's faults, failures, shortcomings and disabilities, but these set the context for a progressive communicative thinker, speaker, initiator and leader, Professor Terence Ryan, and his book on medicine and body image.

It shows us all that failure in the beginning can be followed by success. The name 'Terence' has one meaning "he never gives up" and that phrase truly summarises the history of Terence, his family experiences and their influence on his actions and their outcomes. Terence indicated (and I am certainly aware of it) that he sees himself as an 'interpreter', not only within his specialist fields of microcirculation and the lymphatics and lymphatic diseases and disorders, but also more generally, in terms of his life experiences and how to see and apply the positives of even often difficult or negative experiences.

This is an interesting book with wide-ranging themes and information about his family, his life and his progression through it. More importantly though, is a strong emphasis (and an intent to do so) on the importance of our ability to communicate, to teach and clearly explain to others less informed and then to follow this up with further contact, support and a *camaraderie* rarely experienced. It shows us what we can all do, but rarely take the time to do so nowadays.

Terence's experiences truly cover the globe and not just once, but many times over, meeting people and groups from all walks of life, and initiating some noteworthy projects in developing countries and leading and financially supporting others.

His initial interest in the lymphatics began when he became a member of the British Microcirculation Society, alongside such

individuals as Howard Florey and Henry Bancroft. Terence married Anne in May 1968 in my home town of Adelaide. Did that slow Terence down? No, anything but, as within a few weeks, he began an arduous lecture tour about vascular supply and psoriasis starting in Singapore. While in India, his wife met Mother Teresa!

In the early 1970s, Terence spent many hours showing patients with their vascular disorders new techniques and using new microscopes, leading to his chapters in the groundbreaking book 'Physiology and Pathophysiology of the Skin' and editorship of the 'Handbook of Micro Circulation Studies'.

Later, he helped lay the foundation for Oxford to become an International Centre for Leprosy and associated with it the processing of specimens from Mali and Malawi etc. Then, in 1984, the culmination of his and others' work lead to the holding of the third World Microcirculation Congress in Oxford.

In 1992, Terence was appointed president of the British association of Dermatology leading to better leadership direction and the creation of position documents (now so important to us all no matter what our field) improved training of nursing and other disciplines and, importantly, perhaps saving a service under threat!

The establishment and support for the International Foundation of Dermatology and its presence in Africa lead to significant improvements in health outcomes for their people and spread the knowledge and awareness to other countries, such as Guatemala and China etc. However, none of this was ever easy for Terence and others in leading positions. Scientists at the time often had little time and interest in alternative and complementary medicine. Terence indicates in his book that "scientists wished to find new molecules rather than to disseminate knowledge already available to populations

needing it". But Terence did otherwise and made a difference!

When Terence retired in 1997 (you would hardly call it 'retirement' when you read what he has done since), he decided to take some leadership in the area of the swollen leg (lymphatic and venous failure). He went to Ethiopia and observed the terrible toll of podoconiosis on its agricultural workers. This is a part of the book that is most moving and most relevant. He acknowledged and pursued the intent that in developing nations lymphoedema had to be treated and managed with whatever was locally available, such as herbals, Ayurveda yoga and homeopathy and, at this time, Terence was taken on a mentor to the famed Institute of Applied Dermatology in Kerula India with Dr Narahari. His visits there helped introduce the concept of integrated medicine where by modern knowledge is melded with the Indian medicines and treatments developed over 2,000 years ago.

Community dermatology, skin care for all, using and valuing local resources and knowledge are what Terence is about and, yes, it made a difference and is being increasingly embraced in many countries. Voluntary help and knowledge provision is at the core of everything Terence is about — care, create, teach, delegate, and apply, go (widely), and make (the community matter)!

You have to read this book — I could not put it down — to gain a true indication of the fantastic texture and richness of the life and interactions and achievements of Terence. Go for it; as an aside, you will also learn a lot about the microcirculation, lymphatics and lymphoedema and, who knows, it might give you an idea that will change your life and that of those with these conditions, just where its needed. There is nothing that cannot be done.



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