

CAREER STORES OF NOTABLE PUBLIC HEALTH WOMEN DOCTORS FROM THE LATE 20TH TO EARLY 21ST CENTUURY

Interviews with a number of prominent women public health doctors were undertaken during 2014 and 2015 as part of the research for a thesis in the Department of History, Religion and Philosophy at Oxford Brookes University on the unique evolution of public health women doctors within women in medicine, focusing particularly on the decades 1970s-1990s and events in England (entitled “Public Health Women Doctors in England, 1965 to 1991 - *A Perfect Place for Strategic Butterflies*”, Jennifer M. Wright).

The five interviewees, whose career stories are presented here - Professor Sian Griffiths, Professor Sheila Adam, Professor Mala Rao, Dr Sue Atkinson and Professor Fiona Sim - were selected, with the help of the Faculty of Public Health, for their considerable achievement in strategic leadership roles in public health practice, whether in leading complex organisation, chairing national policy committees, leading international work, promoting education and development.

The interviews delved into their early lives and motivations behind entering medicine then public health, covering their experiences as junior doctors, consultants and delivering complex strategic roles. They provided particular insights into how the women managed to combine senior roles with domestic responsibilities, and also into the specialty of public health as a gender neutral discipline within which women could flourish at a time when it was hard for women doctors in most medical specialties to reach independent practice.

The interviews are presented as a dialogue with initial questions and answers. They include brief career biographies.

Thank you to all the women who gave so generously of their time and their reflections.

Jenny Wright, June 2016

Key Dates from 1970 for public health doctors in England

1972	Establishment of the Faculty of Community Medicine for medical public health specialists and the introduction of a formal training scheme
1974	NHS reorganisation which led to the transfer of all public health doctors from local authority employment to roles within the NHS administrative tiers of Region, Area and District
1982	NHS reorganisation which removed the Area tier and combined its function with the former districts into a new District Health Authority tier
1983	Introduction of general management into the NHS following the Griffiths review
1988	Acheson Report on public health in England led to the establishment of the roles of Director of Public Health and Consultants in Communicable Disease Control in Health Authorities. Community medicine specialists were renamed Consultants in Public Health Medicine
1989	Faculty of Community Medicine renamed Faculty of Public Health Medicine
1991	NHS reorganisation introduces an internal market into the NHS. Public health workforce, for the most part, employed within the purchasing/commissioning structures

1995	Regional Health Authorities abolished and regional teams become part of the civil service, renamed Regional Offices
2002	Full membership by examination of the FPHM opened to disciplines other than medicine
2003	First non-medical specialists and Directors of Public Health accredited via the UK Voluntary Register; Faculty of Public Health Medicine becomes the Faculty of Public Health
2013	NHS reorganisation which led to the public health workforce in England being employed either in upper tier local authorities or in a new civil service agency, Public Health England