

## IN MEMORIAM

# **Bernard Richards (1931 – 2024), FBCS, FIMA, FIHRIM, CEng, CMath, CSci, CITP, Hon. RAMS. Professor (Emeritus) of Medical Informatics, University of Manchester, Manchester, UK**

Review, Received: Jun 04th, 2024; Accepted: Jun 18th, 2024, doi: 10.5455/ijbh.2024.12.152-153, Int J Biomed Healthc. 2024; 12(2): 152-153

Prof. Bernard Richards was born in Whalley Range, Manchester on 16.10.1931. He obtained a Bachelor's Degree with Honours in Mathematics and Physics, and a Master's Thesis entitled "Morphogenesis of Radiolaria", when working with Alan Turing, while the title of his PhD was "Diffraction in Aplanatic Systems" - work supervised by Emil Wolf, subsequently Professor of Optics at Rochester University in New York. From this latter work a paper was published in the Proceedings of the Royal Society which has been cited over 750 times, and is still the recognised authority on the subject, being cited more than 20 times every year since.

After the PhD, he spent a time in the Chemical Industry, as a Scientific Officer, managing that Company's first modern large computer and operating the Company's 'Computer Service'. After that, he took up an appointment in the University studying Medicine and produced the world's first 'Medical Database' when computerizing all the records for the local Infectious Disease Hospital in 1969. Subsequently, in 1971, he masterminded the computerisation of all mother and baby records in the local Maternity Hospital, some 5,500 deliveries. When he was appointed "Professor of Medical Informatics", he was only the second person in the UK to hold this title. Subsequent to this work on hospital databases, he turned his attention to work on Decision Support (Expert) Systems. He produced an Expert System for control of vital clinical parameters for patients in the Intensive Care Unit in 1976, and an Expert System for Cardio-thoracic Surgery (Open Heart Surgery) in 1977, the first in the world.

He contributed to the programs for training physicians to perform bronchoscopy and to a suite of programs in Dental Care. He served on several committees: NHS Committee on NHS Computer Languages, the RCOG Minimum Dataset Committee, the Intensive Care Computer Group, the Occupational Therapy Society's Computer Group, the BCS NMSG (as Chairman), the BCS PHCSG, the BCS LMSG, and the BCS Manchester Branch.

He also Chaired the BCS Health Informatics Committee for many years, and was Chair of



Figure 1. Bernard Richards (1931 – 2024)

the Annual Healthcare Computing (HC) Programme Committee, also for many years, being responsible for the many 'Healthcare Computing Conferences', held mainly at Harrogate in the 1990's, offering bursaries for several young scientists from several Eastern Europe, including Romania.

He authored over 90 publications of which there are 30 publications in medical journals. These areas of research include Infectious Diseases, Gynaecology, Obstetrics, Strokes, Paediatrics, Cardiology, Intensive Care, Gastroenterology, and Infertility. Additionally, a further 30 papers have been given at International Conferences in Medicine and Medical Informatics.

He was elected Chairman of the British Computer Society's "Health Informatics Committee", the most se-



Figure 2. Assa Reichert, George Mihalas, Rolf Engelbrecht, Bernard Richards (from left to right)

nior professional Health Informatics post in the UK. I also became the first President of the Institute of Health Records and Information Management in 1997.

In 1998, prof. Richards was made the British Computer Society's "Fellow of the Year" for services to Medical Informatics. In 1999, I was awarded the Saint Wenceslas Medal of Charles University for "Services to Medicine in Prague". He also received other international recognition by being made an Honorary Fellow of the Medical Computing Societies of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, the Ukraine, and Poland, and a Honorary member of the Romanian Academy of Medical Science. He was also elected a Council Member of the Ukrainian Association for Computer-Medicine. He lectured in almost every country in Europe, and in four of the five Continents.

Prof. Richards delivered one or more papers at every world MEDINFO Conference since 1974, culminating in MEDINFO 2001, being the only person to have presented one or more papers at every one of the first ten

MEDINFO Conferences until 2013. In recognition of this unique achievement I was awarded a Plaque by the International Medical Informatics Association, (IMIA).

In 2010, he lectured at the World Pharmacology Conference in Copenhagen; the World Conference for Medical Records personnel in Milan; and on "The side effects of giving chemicals to the mother during childbirth" at the International Obstetrics Conference in Romania at the invitation of Prof. I Munteanu.

He passed away on April 7th 2024.

The entire community of Medical Informatics mourn the loss of Prof. Bernard Richards, distinguished scientific personality, a pioneer and forerunner of biomedical and health informatics.

God rest his soul in peace!

*Prof. George Mihalas  
Member of the Romanian Academy of Medical  
Sciences and Honorary President of RSMI*