

Gabrielle M Hawksworth (1947-2012)
Professor of Molecular Toxicology
SI Aberdeen

Gabrielle M Hawksworth (Gay) was a pharmacologist who developed an interest in toxicology. She was a pioneer in her field who cultivated links with the pharmaceutical and toxicological communities both at home and abroad. Her work on in vitro drug metabolism using a range of model cell systems was unique in its time. Gay was devoted to her work and loved to enthuse others with her love of the subject. Gay was born in Yorkshire and always loved returning there to visit her family.

She started her professional career at the University of Leeds, moved to St Mary's Hospital Medical School in London, on to spend 6 months as a Visiting Lecturer at the Universidad del Valle in Cali, Colombia on a collaborative research project on nitrosamines and gastric cancer. She moved to Norway where she held a Wellcome European Fellowship at the Department of Pharmacology at the University of Bergen and then back to London where she spent 2 very happy years at the Royal Postgraduate Medical School in the Department of Clinical Pharmacology.



It was here that Gay developed her interest and enthusiasm for toxicology and pharmacology which she maintained throughout her life together with the life-long friends she made there. Gay was ambitious and in 1976 she moved to a Lectureship at the University of Aberdeen where, together with Dr Harold Barber also a recent appointment in Aberdeen, she promoted pharmacology and toxicology within the Medical School on the Foresterhill campus. She was promoted rapidly through Senior Lecturer, Reader and finally, Professor of Molecular Toxicology. Gay had two sabbaticals both at the NIH in Bethesda; one in the Laboratory of Chemical Carcinogenesis at the National Cancer institute and one in the Laboratory of Developmental Pharmacology.

Science was Gay's great love and she was never happier than when she was surrounded by students. Postgraduates and undergraduates alike were encouraged to think "big" and work out problems. Gay expended an enormous amount of effort in support of her students. She has supervised almost 50 research students in Aberdeen, including 31 PhD students. She brought out the best in her students and this will be part of her legacy to pharmacology and toxicology.

Gay benefitted society through her scientific research. Gay was very focussed and made advances in her research field in a logical and sequential manner, publishing approaching

150 scholarly scientific papers in the process. Her research career centred around the molecular mechanisms responsible for drug- and xenobiotic-induced hepatotoxicity and nephrotoxicity. This was authentic translational research with an impact on human health. Through painstaking laboratory experimentation which determined the mechanisms of organ toxicity, strategies to reduce or reverse organ damage from drugs and other toxins could be developed. Global recognition of Gay's work is clearly apparent through very frequent invitations to speak at international conferences.

Gay served on a wide range of influential Working Parties, Expert Committees and Learned Societies. Her sustained contributions to the British Toxicology Society culminated in her appointment to the lead role as Society President in 2006 and she contributed for many years to the crucial work of the Medicines Commission, and to the Herbal Medicines Advisory Committee, and has been a Council Member on the International Society for the Study of Xenobiotics. Gay was an expert member on the Advisory Committee for Pesticides, an independent scientific committee which provides advice to Ministers, since 2005 and, in 2011 the new Chair of this highly influential Committee, the work of which impacts on the lives of us all.

She loved to travel and was a regular visitor to USA and Australia as well as the sunnier climes of Europe. In addition, Gay believed in helping others and was a member of Soroptimist International of Great Britain and Ireland (SIGBI). Gay was a Past President of the Aberdeen club and also Regional President for North East Scotland where her interests were in helping girls and women develop their skills and talents. Bringing on the next generation of scientists was always a priority for Gay and her students always found her door open and Gay willing to challenge their results and ideas. In both her students and her published work Gay's legacy will live on. Gay was one of the world's enthusiasts. She enjoyed all that she did and undertook everything with a positive attitude and a will to succeed.

Sources: Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh and Heather M Wallace, University of Aberdeen