

Dr Jim Lawrie

Brief Biog for Dr Jim Lawrie April 2013

I have worked as a GP (family doctor) in the East End of London, for the last 25 years. My training year was in Hackney, and then I spent 5 years as a single handed GP working at the bottom of a tower block in Tower Hamlets. Since 1992 I have worked in Newham, starting a new practice from scratch in a porta-kabin on a piece of waste land. This has developed into a group practice with 6 doctors and 9,500 patients, in a purpose built health centre. In 1994 I set up the Newham out of hours co-operative with 2 other GPs. This organisation has grown to provide out of hours cover to the whole population of Newham, about 330,000 people. We are still a co-operative and I remain involved both at operational and strategic levels. I work Monday evenings from the urgent care centre. I worked as a course organiser for 5 years, teaching GP trainees in Hackney. I have taught medical students for the last 14 years, and I am a clinical lecturer at Queen Mary College university of London. I have recently trained as a tutor for post graduate doctors doing a work based training programme in general practice.



For 12 years I worked on Sundays with the Whitechapel mission in London E1. This day centre provides food and washing facilities and a change of clothes for street homeless men and women. I developed a deep interest in the treatment of addictive conditions, both to drugs and alcohol, during this time. I was awarded the MBE in December 2000, for the work I did with the Whitechapel mission.

The practice population reflects the demographics of Newham. About half of our patients are from ethnic minorities, with a greater number of younger patients, about one and a half times the national average for under 35 years. Despite the turnover of patients in this inner city practice, I developed a close knowledge and understanding of many families, from many different cultures. It has been a privilege to see families and individuals grow and develop. I have often been fascinated to discover lines of relationship that were completely unexpected amongst my patients. My clinical interests apart from the fascination of family illness and family dynamics, are: Nutrition and obesity, Mental health problems both minor and major, dermatology, urgent and out of hours care, and teaching medical students and doctors.

I believe strongly in the modern focus of health promotion and better care of chronic diseases, including the prevention of these diseases where possible. Working with patients to avoid disease and improve their lifestyle may not be too glamorous, but it will have the greatest impact of the health of the population!

In my somewhat distant younger days, I used to row, ran a couple of marathons, and worked for Save the Children in Nepal. My job there was sharpening the vaccination needles on a stone outside the clinic, before they were boiled for re-use! That was before the advent of HIV infection. I also painted a mural of Whinnie the Poo in the waiting room. I have often wondered how long it survived.

I have some experience of radio and television. Between 1996 and 2001 I was the occasional 'doctor in the house' for the Big Breakfast, a morning TV programme. Always an early start with lots of excitement to wake you up! In 1994 I was the subject of a fly on the wall documentary for Channel 4 called 'The big story', about a day in the life of an inner city GP. (Tape available if you are interested!) In 2002 to 2003 I was the media doctor to Liberty radio, a phone in problem programme on our local, Stratford E15 radio. Quite a challenge as it was all live and I had no idea what the questions were about until the caller spoke to me on air. From 2003 to 2005 I was a visiting doctor to 'The Big Toe Show', a children's afternoon show on BBC radio7 digital radio. Children phoned me with problems, usually related to the programme theme, but some unexpected questions cropped up. I have had various one-off media experiences, including: a Richard and Judy interview on sun cream, a live TV interview in 1995 with some witches and 2 or 3 Newsnight interviews some years ago, mostly about inner city medicine.

I hope that I am a good listener and my patients find me sympathetic. Although not a cardigan, I care strongly about doing the best for the people who come to see me for help. I am on the panel of 'Doctors for Doctors', the British Medical Association telephone helpline for sick doctors.

Dr Jim Lawrie FRCGP MBBS MA (Oxon) MBE