

Mark Davis

3 November 1952–26 April 2021



Psychiatrist, MBChB: 1976,
MRCPsych (1983), FRANZCP (1986)

Mark was born in Nelson, on 3 November 1952, to parents, Dr John Davis and Gladys Davis.

John was a General Practitioner in Wakefield. He provided great inspiration for Mark's future career in medicine.

Mark attended Wakefield Primary School, Waimea Intermediate and Waimea College. During his school years he excelled at tennis and took an early (and lifelong) interest in golf.

In 1971 he attended the University of Otago to embark on his medical career. These were fun and productive years, with Mark further developing his interests in music, movies, poetry, meditation, yoga and spirituality. He completed his undergraduate years flatting in the idyllic

seaside village of Brighton Beach, south of Dunedin. He often recalled these as some of his happiest years.

His trainee intern year saw Mark move to Wellington and graduate with Distinction in Psychological Medicine in 1976. He was awarded The Smith, Klein & French prize for top student in Psychological Medicine. House Surgeon and Psychiatric Registrar years followed in Wellington and Lower Hutt. These were hectic years with long after-hours call duties.

Mark's communication skills and good humour made him a favourite on the wards. In this context he met his future wife and lifelong soulmate, Sally Rutherford.

Mark obtained his MRCPsych after further training in Northampton and Oxford. The

following year he became a Senior Registrar in Psychotherapy at Cassel Hospital, where he worked under Medical Director Tom Main, who had trained in psychoanalysis under Michael Balint and was supervised by Melanie Klein and Anna Freud.

Throughout the years that followed, Mark pursued knowledge of himself. Through meditation, workshops and retreats run by Ken Mellor in Victoria, Mark greatly enriched his ability to monitor both sides of the interaction between patient and doctor, an important skill in medicine and particularly psychiatry.

After returning to New Zealand and obtaining Fellowship with the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, Mark worked as a consultant in the newly established psychiatric service at Hutt Hospital until 1995. In private practice from 1990, he was still doing some work at the time of his final illness.

Mark's experience at the Cassel Hospital led to many other involvements. He was a Balint Group facilitator with Wellington region GPs and was a board member of the Balint Society. He was a psychiatrist to the Te Omanga Hospice, Member of the Medical Council of New Zealand Education Committee (1998–2003), Member of the Health Advisory Committee to the Veterinary Council of New Zealand, Member of the New Zealand Doctors' Health Advisory Service (1993–2004) and Member of an ACC liaison advisory committee.

Mark continued learning from others while contributing his passion, curiosity and insight. He met individually and regularly with a number of his colleagues and belonged to several other peer groups which focused on psychotherapy, pain and practice issues.

Mark's early years of working in general adult psychiatry were replaced in more recent years by medico-legal work. His intelligence and curiosity were particularly valuable in medico-legal assessments resulting in accuracy and detail. He developed expertise in the assessment of post-injury pain and assessment of the psychological factors and disorders which impair post-injury recovery. This assisted the ACC, along with many patients and their lawyers, to achieve fair outcomes. His opinions are often quoted in current ACC case law.

For over 10 years, Mark assisted coroners in reviewing suicides in psychiatric care. His expertise was used by the Medical Council and in reviews of insurance claims, war pensions and employment disputes.

Mark was forever seeking to improve his golf swing and had recently achieved the satisfaction of pushing out a 300m drive. Father and son events were his favourite. He adored his home club, the Royal Wellington Golf Club, especially the annual offal luncheons.

Mark was a gifted violinist. The violin would accompany him to medical reunions, birthdays, weddings and more. They were fun events, especially when Mark performed his Cossack dance routine. It was fitting that Mark's memorial concluded with Ralph Williams' "The Lark Ascending."

Paramount to Mark was his love for family and friends.

On Monday 26 April 2021, Mark died peacefully at home, surrounded by his loving family. He is survived by wife Sally, siblings Annie and Ken and children: Juliette and partner Simon and son Nikki, Nicko and wife Michelle, twins Katie and Jessie and grandchildren Theo and Lottie.

Competing interests:

Nil.

Author information:

Nicko Davis: Lawyer.

Toni Marks: Psychiatrist.

Denis Atkinson: Orthopaedic Surgeon.

Corresponding author:

Denis Atkinson, Orthopaedic Surgeon

orthohb@xtra.co.nz

URL:

www.nzma.org.nz/journal-articles/mark-davis
