

What a Difference Thirty Years makes

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Barry Firkin was an ideal mentor; knowledgeable, enthusiastic, curious and generous. His own mentor, Professor Ruthven Blackburn, had introduced him to haemophilia in Sydney in 1955. Barry's pioneering coagulation studies of FVII and VWF with Margaret Howard, from the early seventies, complemented a career-long interest in the welfare of patients with bleeding disorders and thrombotic disorders.

In 1984, Australians were confronted by HIV transmitted by transfusion, clinicians were challenged and the haemophilia community devastated. There was wide spread fear and loss of confidence in the health system. Haemophilia treatment centres, where they had arisen "ad hoc". were poorly resourced to cope with the epidemic. There was added frustration because of severe and continuous supply constraints of plasma derived replacement factors and then there was HCV.

Barry encouraged me to enter this (mine)field of medicine and provide much appreciated support until his death.

Nearly thirty years later the ground has completely changed. Australian and New Zealand patients have access to and availability of recombinant products in plentiful amounts. Haemophilia centres have become multi-disciplinary clinics, with funder and clinician subscription to the principles of chronic disease management and measurement of patient related outcomes. Now commonplace, Haemostasis-Thrombosis Units offer recognized value to medical institutions and excitement to bright young clinical researchers

In describing the journey and lessons from then to now I am mindful that we all need to learn from our histories' documentation and from our mentors

Keywords haemophilia, management, mentors

Conflict of interest None