

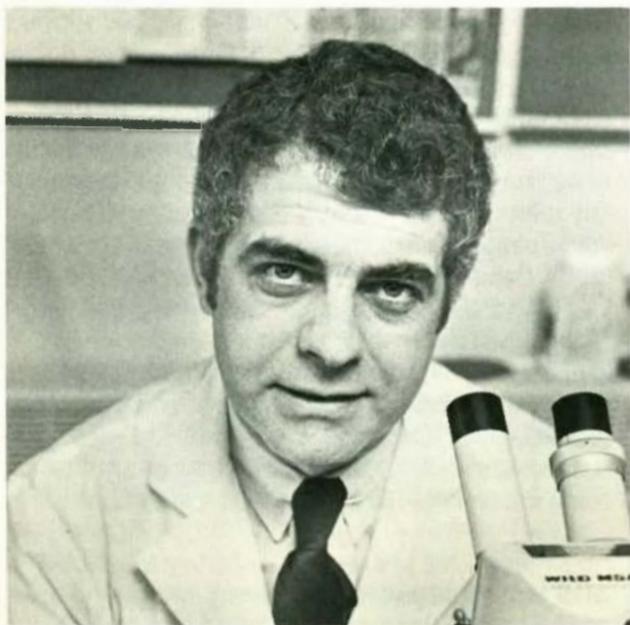


4-1-1982

Dr. Colin Johnstone: The Constant Juggler

PROFILES

Dr. Colin Johnstone The Constant Juggler



The activities on parasitologist Colin Johnstone's work schedule are like the cars on the rush-hour Schuylkill Expressway: varied, numerous, and bumper-to-bumper.

"Once I get interested in something," says Dr. Johnstone, the soft-spoken, hard-working Assistant Professor of Parasitology and Associate Dean of Student Affairs, "I find the time—somehow—to squeeze it into my schedule."

Some squeeze, that. In addition to his varied teaching assignments and extensive responsibilities as the associate dean of student affairs, Dr. Johnstone has maintained several ongoing research projects on both front and back burners, served on the Veterinary School admissions committee for four years—for whom he was in charge of minority recruitment—and stayed actively involved in both local politics and an outside business.

"It's a constant juggling act," says the busy Dr. J, as many students know him. "I suffer from what perhaps many of my colleagues would call a weakness, in that my interests are fairly wide and varied."

"In academia, you have to establish priorities for your activities and concerns. But I have a hard time putting anything first. I value everything that I'm doing. I consider everything important."

"And so I juggle: sometimes I decide that my research is getting a little behind, so I stress that for a stretch, whereas at another time, I'll feel that I'm neglecting the students a bit, so I'll direct my efforts in that direction."

Born in Cumbria County, a rural area in northern England, the budding veterinary juggler, whose childhood friends were the children of farmers, went to school in Glasgow, attending the Glasgow University School of Veterinary Medicine.

"As far as getting into veterinary medicine," he explains, "mine is the classic story of the

kid who fell in love with animals and just went from there. My first hero was a veterinarian. I thought that what veterinarians did—helping sick animals get better—was wonderful."

In 1964, during his second year of veterinary school, Colin spent the summer in North America, visiting a friend at the School of Veterinary Medicine's New Bolton Center in passing. Later, after graduating and beginning a practice in the town of Bolton (!) in Yorkshire for six months, he accepted a position in the New Bolton Center's Leukemia program in 1967. Three years later, he entered the University of Pennsylvania's graduate program in parasitology, receiving his Ph.D. in 1976. Then, in 1977, he was appointed to the Veterinary School's faculty.

"The parasites which I'm interested in," explains Dr. Johnstone, "are those which live inside animals and humans and which not only live there but also cause disease by virtue of their presence or their feeding activities."

Consequently, his research projects involve various aspects of parasitism, including the nutritional interrelationships of parasitic infections in sheep, the brain worm problem in Pennsylvania's elk herd, the effects on milk production in dairy cattle, and the causes of colic in horses.

"There has to be a continual search for new drugs in parasitology," maintains Dr. Johnstone, who recently organized a well-attended, productive, state-of-the-art Symposium on Parasites for horse breeders, owners, and trainers. "The drugs that we have tend to get overused. And one of the problems in using any drug too frequently is that you tend to eventually select out of the population parasites that are resistant, or no longer susceptible to, the drug. No drug ever kills off a hundred percent of the parasite. So the danger is that eventually the resistant population can become predominant."

Dr. Johnstone's research calendar alone would seem to leave precious little time and space for any kind of deanship. But the Associate Dean of Student Affairs manages anyway.

"It's a grand title, isn't it?" he laughs. "Actually, I'm responsible for at least trying to deal with just about any problem that any of our approximately 430 students might have, either as individuals or as a group."

"Even though I'm part of the school administration myself, I function as a sort of interface between the school administration and the bureaucracy of the University. My job is to cut through the red tape to solve whatever problem arises—whether it's a matter of financial aid, student health service, or an academic problem. I have to create bridges."

"It's amazing how you can always find time for things you enjoy doing," he says. "And you become more efficient."

And does his overpopulated schedule indicate that he is a card-carrying workaholic?

"No," says Dr. Colin Johnstone. "Because I'm not compulsive about it. I enjoy everything I do. But I don't get anxiety attacks when I'm not working."

Dr. Helen Acland Down-Under Fracture



Sydney, Australia is a long way to go just to get a fracture of the tibia and fibula, but this is what happened to Dr. Helen Acland. Naturally, she did not have this in mind when she made the trip in January 1982. Actually she went to Australia, which is her home, to participate in the Third International Symposium on Equine Reproduction, where she presented a paper on contagious equine metritis. This was her first trip home in five years, and while there she decided to do some traveling by minibike. Hence the fractures. Helen is now on crutches and is making good, if agonizingly slow, progress.

Dr. Acland came to the United States in 1976. At that time she wanted to pursue a career in pathology, while her husband, Gregory, who is also a veterinarian, was interested in doing graduate work in ophthalmology. Both of these goals were realized at the University of Pennsylvania. Since 1976, Helen has been assistant professor of pathology at New Bolton Center, and Greg has been doing Ph.D. work in his specialty.

Helen Acland graduated from the University of Sydney with a B.V.Sc. degree in 1965. She immediately joined the New South Wales Department of Agriculture as a veterinary research officer, located at the Veterinary Research Station at Glenfield, N.S.W., Australia. Dr. Acland describes this as a very busy central laboratory for the state. In Australia, these laboratories conduct considerable research, as well as providing necropsies and histopathological examinations on food and fiber-producing animals. Before leaving Australia, she had become special veterinary research officer in the laboratory, and conducted research on encephalomyocarditis in pigs, tuberculosis in sheep, border disease in sheep, and on Parma wallaby herpesvirus infection.

In addition to her appointment as assistant professor of pathology, Dr. Acland serves as head of the laboratory of large animal pathol-