

Donna Lamping (1953–2011)

Nick Black · Neil Aaronson

Published online: 29 October 2011

© The Author(s) 2011. This article is published with open access at Springerlink.com

Donna Lamping, who has died at age 58, was an international expert in the field of health psychology, health status and quality of life assessment. Educated and trained in centres of excellence in Canada and the USA, she brought her cutting-edge knowledge to the UK in 1992. Despite her early death, the cadre of young scientists she nurtured and developed over the past two decades will sustain her impact.

Donna grew up in Toronto. After graduating in psychology from the University of Waterloo, she was awarded a prestigious doctoral fellowship from the Canadian Social Science and Humanities Research Council to study at Harvard University. Even at this early stage, her interest was as much on patient welfare as on methodological rigour, a combination that was to feature throughout her professional career. In her doctoral research, she investigated how patients with chronic illness adapt and adjust to the inevitable stresses of their illness.

A research post at Harvard was followed by assistant professorships at McMaster University in Hamilton, Fordham University in New York and McGill University in Montreal. Throughout this period, her research focused on understanding the behavioural impact of chronic illness, initially considering patients with chronic kidney disease requiring haemodialysis but later shifting to the challenges facing those diagnosed with HIV and AIDS.



Her move to McGill was a key to her subsequent career, as she left behind the disciplinary comfort of psychology and entered a multidisciplinary world, working with epidemiologists, statisticians, economists and others. Here, she had to demonstrate how essential psychology was to the understanding of health and disease. In turn, exposure to these other disciplines led her to what was to become her lasting concern, the measurement of patients' own perceptions of their condition.

During her time at McMaster, Donna met Itesh Sachdev, a social psychologist of language, who she married in Nepal in 1991. By then Itesh was at Birkbeck College, London and the travails of sustaining an inter-continental relationship led Donna to join the staff of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. She also had an appointment at the National Health Service that facilitated the practical application of newly developed measurement instruments. Apart from establishing psychometrics in the LSHTM, Donna made major managerial contributions both as Head of the Health Services Research Unit and in transforming the School's doctoral programme.

N. Black

Department of Health Services Research and Policy, London
School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, London, UK
e-mail: Nick.Black@lshtm.ac.uk

N. Aaronson

Department of Psychosocial Research, The Netherlands Cancer
Institute, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
e-mail: n.aaronson@nki.nl

Over the following two decades, Donna confirmed her position not only as a leader in the UK but also internationally. She was a long-standing member of ISOQOL, the International Society for Quality Of Life Research. She served as a member of its board from 2002 to 2005, on its executive committee from 2006 to 2008, and was its president in 2007. During her tenure as president, Donna spearheaded a number of important initiatives designed to strengthen the society's infrastructure and to ensure its continuity and its growth. This included the following: establishing an Advisory Council of Past President's to harness the collective experience of previous Society leaders, and thus help guide the development of a more strategic, long-term view of where the society wants and needs to go; forming several committees to ensure high-quality annual meetings and a professional leadership structure; and, perhaps most importantly, nurturing the New Investigators Special Interest Group as a home for the younger generation of scientists and future leaders of the Society.

Those are some of the tangibles. But Donna meant so much more to the Society. She was an elegant, articulate, sensitive and extremely skilled leader, who taught by example. She was generous of her time, respectful of others' points of view, while at the same time keeping an

eye on the ball, making sure that there was agenda to pursue and pursuing it in such a way that the job got done. Donna had an uncanny talent for combining patience and pragmatism. She had an iron fist in a velvet glove, with the diplomacy and tact to resolve things rationally, and the guts to take on a no-nonsense tone when circumstances demanded it.

Donna was delightful, intelligent and indefatigable. Developing insulin-dependent diabetes in her forties was taken in her stride, something she was not going to allow to interfere with her zest for life, her optimism and her extraordinary generosity to family, friends, colleagues and students. The same spirit was apparent when, in summer 2010, she discovered the bowel cancer to which she has succumbed. Perhaps her earlier studies of adjustment to illness had provided her with the insight to be able to remain so life affirming until the end.

Donna is survived by her husband, Itesh, and her mother and sister, Helen and Gina.

Open Access This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Noncommercial License which permits any noncommercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author(s) and source are credited.