

## Obituary

## John Andrew Pickering OAM, MBChB, GradDipHA, FRACGP, FRACMA



**JOHN PICKERING** was born on 16 April 1938 in Egypt and graduated in medicine from the University of Sheffield, England, in 1961.

In 1964, he came to Australia to work as a resident medical officer at Wimmera Base Hospital in Horsham, Victoria. The following year, he moved to nearby Dimboola, working in general practice with the revered Alistair Hinchley.

John moved to New South Wales in 1970, working as the Medical Superintendent at Port Kembla Hospital, then as a community physician in the Western Metropolitan Health Region and subsequently in general practice in Sydney.

He returned to Dimboola in 1979 and, with his wife Annette, ran a general practice. John mentored numerous registrars and many have gone on to stellar careers in medicine.

John was a long-time Board of Management member of Dimboola District Hospital and Wimmera Health Care Group, and a Fellow, life member and examiner of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners.

In 2007, he received a Victorian Rural Doctors Award for outstanding contribution to rural communities, and in

2011, he was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for his "service to medicine, particularly in rural and regional areas, and to the Indigenous community".

John retired from full-time practice at Dimboola in 2010, after developing a rare form of bladder cancer, although he continued to do locums around Australia, particularly on Hamilton Island, which became his new home.

His interests included physical fitness — he completed his first marathon at age 65 — fine food and wine, playing cricket for the local team, and driving his many and varied sports cars around the area.

John was a true rural general practitioner — performing procedures, delivering babies and being available to his patients around the clock.

John was much loved and respected by the Dimboola community and was an extremely dedicated and caring general practitioner who provided exemplary care. He was always looking for ways to provide the best care and was an ideal role model for aspiring rural general practitioners.

John died on Hamilton Island on 27 August 2012.

Alan M Wolff

doi:10.5694/mja13.10530

## Book review

## Neat model for ethical problem solving

*Ethics and law for the health professions*, 4th ed. Ian Kerridge, Michael Lowe, Cameron Stewart. Sydney: Federation Press, 2013 (1232 pp, \$90). ISBN 9781862879096.

INTO A FOURTH EDITION — and my, how it's grown! Having started life in 1998 at a portable (but hardly pocket-sized) 500 pages, it is now a hefty 1200. Most of the growth comes from the doubling in size of the chapters, with a few entirely new sections for this edition, most notably some cautionary tales about emerging biotechnologies. Sexuality and reproduction has received much greater attention, as has our rather problematic relationship with the drug industry.

This new edition also has the most sophisticated model for ethical problem solving in clinical medicine that I have seen — a neat attempt to distil the best from existing models in use in the United States clinical ethics industry.

As in the earlier editions, the first question posed is "what is ethics?", but it behoves a reviewer to also ask "what use is ethics, and why do we want a 1200-page textbook on it?". We have little empirical evidence that clinicians see "ethics" as separable from other elements of clinical practice, or that they use models for ethical problem solving (however sophisticated). So there seems

little likelihood that such a textbook could occupy the same ecological niche as a Harrison's.

But this text has great strengths that have become more apparent with its increasing maturity. The integration of ethics and law is nicely balanced — at arm's length in the beginning, but more integrated as the book progresses through the core topics.

The authors, Ian Kerridge and Cameron Stewart of the University of Sydney's Centre for Values, Ethics and the Law in Medicine, and Northern Territory community geriatrician Michael Lowe, are more than qualified for the job. Stewart's legal radar is spot on, with laser-sharp analysis, and Kerridge and Lowe give full rein to their imagination, drawing in material from a dizzying array of sources.

Most of all, this book is that greatest rarity — a standard text that is a page turner, a cracking read that quotes from the *Bhagavad Gita*, and contains a Henry Lawson poem, in full. You don't get that in Harrison's.

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doi:10.5694/mja13.10868

