

Dr David Pothier – 15 December 1973 - 27 July 2018

David Pothier passed away on July 27, 2018 in the early hours of the morning following a struggle with recurrent brain cancer. His passing extinguished a brilliant light, the likes of which few of us will witness in our lifetime. Here we have gathered a selection of moving tributes from some of his dear friends and colleagues.

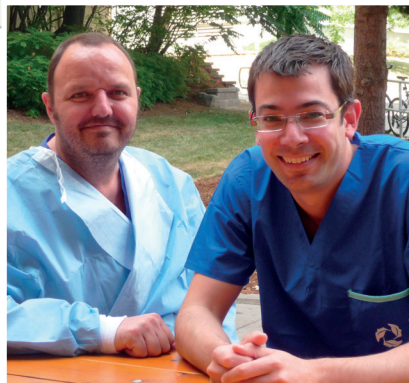


Please visit our website to see more tributes to Dave Pothier.
www.entandaudiologynews.com

I first met Dave at the Royal United Hospital, Bath. I desperately needed a research project and the solution had just joined the unit. "You should chat to Dave..."

It was career changing advice. I still recall meeting Dave in the doctors' mess. It only took about 20 minutes for him to teach me more about pushing through a project than most others have taught me since. His enthusiastic, pragmatic approach, combined with an eye for unique research opportunities, quickly lead to a number of publications.

I, and numerous others, owe a huge debt of gratitude to Dave, not just for those early projects, but for fuelling an interest in critical thinking and research. I



David with Philip Clamp.

was fortunate enough to spend time with Dave and hugely enjoyed his company. Those that knew him will attest to how engaging he was to chat with; humorous, charming, outspoken and always

challenging convention. I was lucky to ride in his wake and relished the occasional opportunity to catch up over the years. Even after his diagnosis, he remained as magnanimous, sanguine, determined and brutally honest, as ever. He passed the ultimate test of character with flying colours.

Dave left an indelible mark on myself and the whole of the south-west ENT community. He had a larger than life persona, phenomenal intellect and boundless drive to achieve. He will be missed as a colleague, a friend and a truly unique character.

Philip Clamp, Consultant in ENT and Skull Base Surgery, University Hospitals Bristol.

I came to know David during the 2008 AAO-HNS meeting in Toronto where he was reporting for ENT & Audiology News. He expressed an interest in fellowship training in Toronto. He later accomplished that goal when he was awarded the TWJ fellowship. He subsequently became a trusted colleague at the University of Toronto and a dear friend to all those who worked and trained with him.

The Toronto years were marked by an endless curiosity regarding the functioning of the vestibular system, the development of new technology for those with bilateral vestibular loss and defining the role of catastrophisation played in those with dizziness. Using existing cell phone and recreational gaming technology, he and his friend, computer engineer Cian Hughes, developed the VESTIO device, a cost-effective balance workshop using a commercially available forceplate and computerised dynamic visual acuity testing to assist in the prevention of



(L-R) David, Neil Bailie and John Rutka.

aminoglycoside vestibulotoxicity. David was also a very keen proponent of endoscopic ear surgery and a founding member of the International Working Group for Endoscopic Ear Surgery (IWGEES). His leading role in promoting this surgical technique was accompanied by his popular presence at endoscopic ear surgical courses throughout the world. Before his passing, David and his co-author, Jane Lea from Vancouver, completed their seminal book on vestibular disorders, soon to be published.

On a personal note, when David was

diagnosed with brain cancer I decided I would buy him a nice cigar to smoke every month of his life. Never a habit those in the medical field usually endorse, I appreciated the pleasure David always received smoking a good Cohiba. I told him I had hoped it would cost me thousands of dollars to which the scientist in him scoffed. In the end, delivering more than 90 cigars, including bonuses for Christmas and birthdays, I was able to fulfil my end of the bargain. I only wish, however, it could have cost me tens of thousands instead.

In David's passing, I pause to reflect what he would have accomplished had he not developed a brain cancer a few years into his staff position at the University of Toronto. He accomplished much in his short life and we will dearly miss his presence. Rest peacefully dear friend wherever your final voyage takes you.

John Rutka, Professor of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery, University of Toronto, Canada.

I first became friends with Dave (or DP, as I would call him) when I was a newly-minted audiologist, fresh out of university. Within the hallways of Toronto General Hospital, all of the doctors seemed terrifying to me but no one was more terrifying than Dr Pothier. With his large stature and booming voice brimming with confidence, he was truly larger than life.

My fear wasn't completely off base – Dave did not suffer fools – but he greatly valued curiosity and would generously invest time in anyone with an inquisitive mind and a passion for research. With a fist bump, he soon announced that I was a “top man” (a great compliment in the Dave lexicon), and just like that, I officially had a new friend and mentor.

Dave applied critical thought to everything in his surroundings. I often wondered if there was anything – no matter how important or trivial – that he hadn't developed a reasoned opinion



on. He would never take anything at face value and nothing was held sacred as fact unless proven so, including some of the assumed truths of vestibular audiology practice that I had never thought to question. I spent hours poring over the literature, eager to find answers to his many ‘why’ questions. In the process, I accidentally became more knowledgeable in my field.

Dave achieved an incredible amount in his far-too-short life. As a researcher, he published prolifically. He was a pioneering surgeon; a devoted husband and father;

an accomplished wood-worker; and a professional climber prior to entering the medical profession. The breadth of his knowledge and ability could be exasperating at times. He even had a higher score than me on Candy Crush!

Dave leaves behind a devastating void for all who knew him, whose lives were greatly enriched by his friendship and mentorship. Dave instilled a passion for research and the pursuit of knowledge in many, a legacy that will surely live on. I will carry the many laughs and spirited debates in my memory and will be forever be grateful for the opportunities he opened up for me, including recommending me to become an editor for this very publication. Farewell, my friend – you will be missed.

Carolyn Falls, Tech Reviews Section Editor, ENT & Audiology News; Clinical Audiologist, Toronto General Hospital, Canada.

I first met David Douglas Pothier at registrar interviews in Bristol. We were appointed together and progressed through training side by side. Dave was not interested in head and neck surgery. I was not interested in otology. We hit it off immediately.

As a trainee, Dave was a force of nature. He appreciated the opportunities afforded to him, and, as such, didn't have much time for the ‘lovely guys’. Being nice wasn't sufficient. He enjoyed achievers and, as an educator and mentor, realised people's potential. He had more energy than should be contained in one man, a fierce intellect, and crushing logic. Dave was genius at putting ideas into practice and turning the abstract real. He was a finisher, whether video games, academic projects, or woodworking.

Our carpools from Bristol to Bath are memories of vibrant debate; he the cold cool logic and I the hot-headed Scot. For all that, Dave had a wicked sense of humour. We had so many inside jokes from years of banter that it must have been irritating to be out with us. He was, quite simply, my best friend.

He loved Louise and James. He loved his friends. He loved his work. He was supportive and loyal to a fault. He was a

brother to me and always there when I needed him.

Dave was not an emotional or sentimental man. He wouldn't allow sympathy or sentiment to affect him during his illness. His strength and bravery were inspirational. He never complained. We will mourn him, but he wouldn't want us to feel sorry for ourselves. After all, we're big fans of consistency, aren't we Davey?

David Grant, Consultant Surgeon, Head & Neck Oncology & Thyroid Surgery, UK.



David Grant: “Dave and I doing something we no doubt shouldn't have been!”

I came to know Dave Pothier in July of 2006 when he wrote me a message expressing his interest in endoscopic ear surgery. I had been advocating this for 10 years with no other human being, let alone an otologist, showing any interest in this technique. I was really excited that a fellow ENT surgeon saw some wisdom in using the endoscope in transcanal ear surgery. What was remarkable to me at that time was that Dave was a trainee but felt personally empowered to talk to his teachers and professors about the technique and its advantages. Since 2006, I had a very close relationship with Dave, both personally and professionally. He was a clear leader in this emerging field of EES and was a moving force behind the IWGEES organisation (Dave was the president of the IWGEES when he passed away). He always saw things in a different light than others and never shied away from expressing and defending what's going on in his mind. His strong and single-minded personality has carried him through his years living with the tumour in a ‘matter of fact’ approach, never stopping a second to feel sorry for himself or get scared of his own mortality. As we travelled together to many corners of the world advocating and teaching EES, I got to know all those little quirks that made Dave such a special person. Much of my interactions with Dave were during his smoking breaks from the meetings and seminars and I always joked around with him that he gave enough second-hand smoke to last me a lifetime.

Muaaz Tarabichi, ENT Surgeon, Dubai.



Dave and Muaaz Tarabichi at a sushi restaurant in Tokyo, 2013.