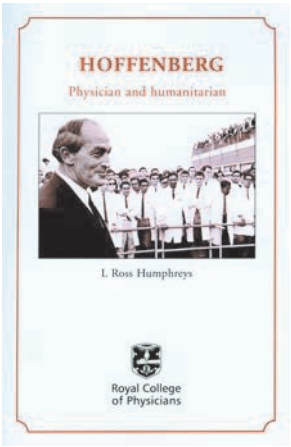
South African medico, exile and patriot

Hoffenberg. Physician and humanitarian. L Ross Humphreys. London: Royal College of Physicians, 2010 (xi + 174 pp, $34.50). ISBN 9781860163661.



"HOFFENBERG" PROBABLY MEANS little to most Australian doctors other than those fortunate Queenslanders who met him during his short tenure as Professor of Medical Ethics from 1993 to 1995. It means a lot, however, to expatriate South African-trained doctors, to Fellows of the Royal College of Physicians, London, and to Queenslander Ross Humphreys.

Humphreys has written an eminently readable biography of one of those stars of the South African medical firmament who, after leaving the country during the apartheid era, distinguished themselves in their field in Britain.

Unlike most of the other expatriate doctors in this group, Hoffenberg was, literally, exiled. Nevertheless, Sir Raymond (Bill) Hoffenberg shone among his fellow ex-South African FRCPs, Fellows of the Royal Society, Knights of the Realm and Nobel prize-winners.

Humphreys, in explaining Hoffenberg's forced departure from South Africa, provides an excellent introduction to apartheid. He details Hoffenberg's progress, from his appointment at Birmingham University to his time as President of the Royal College of Physicians and President of Wolfson College, University of Oxford. He describes Hoffenberg's interest and research in a wide range of diseases, and in teaching and mentoring colleagues, as well as his initiation of medical audit and his overwhelming concern with medical ethics.

Hoffenberg never lost his emotional attachment to South Africa, as evidenced by his continued assistance to other "refugees" from the system and, when apartheid ended, his strong support for medical research and education in that country. His connection with Australia commenced when he came to Brisbane to join his sons.

This little book will appeal to anyone with an interest in South Africa, in British medical history from the late 1960s to the early 1990s, and in medical education, research, clinical audit or ethics. My only criticism is of the proofreading. My friend and colleague is not *Patricia* but *Priscilla* Kincaid-Smith; sloppy grammar and punctuation require a double-take of some sentences, and I was saddened to see the need for "Apostrophe Man".*

Peter C Arnold
General Practitioner (retired)
Sydney, NSW

*George Richards, editor of *The Sydney Morning Herald's* Column 8 for many years, fought against the misuse of apostrophes through a fictitious, nitpicking character he called Apostrophe Man. http://www.bdb.co.za/shackle/articles/punctuation.htm.