

Breheney, James (1936 - 2024)

Associate Professor James (Jim) Breheney, OAM, MBBS, FRACP, FRACMA, FAMA, AFACHSM FAICD

was born on 11th January 1936. He studied medicine at the University of Melbourne graduating in 1960, before undertaking training in paediatrics, gaining Fellowship of RACP in 1967. He married Maureen Walsh on 19th December 1960 and they have three children and eight grandchildren.

In 1968 he was Chief Resident and acting physician to the acute respiratory ward at the Royal Children's Hospital. It was also in this year that he was appointed as Acting Medical Director at RCH following the resignation of Nigel Gray, and whilst LEG Sloan was on sabbatical in London. In subsequent years his main role at RCH was as honorary sessional Physician to the Genetics unit under David Danks, a position he held until 1986.

He played an important role in the establishment of a proper ICU separate from the theatre recovery room. In 1968 during his term as Neonatal Registrar he was responsible for their care but aspects of their management were directed by surgeons and anaesthetists. There were no trained ICU specialists then. Anaesthetists were expert at pain relief and paralyzing patients but at that time they were not trained as physicians. Jim's work helped to demonstrate the need for a trained unit leader and a specialist department. Every day Jim would take charge of the overall management and write up a totally new and clear treatment sheet ensuring there was no oversight or duplications regarding orders by several doctors. Another example was his introduction of total parenteral nutrition when protein and fat substances had just become available for IV use.

He was elected to the important position of President of The Paediatric Society of Victoria in 1974. He went on to work in medical administration and management. His management roles included Deputy and Acting Medical Director at RCH (as noted above), Medical Director at Mercy Maternity Hospital (he was appointed as Foundation Medical Director there from 1970), and later Epworth Freemasons. He also held Executive positions at St John of God (CEO), Western Health, and Swan Hill and District Health. He was elected President of the Victorian Branch of the British Medical Association and of the Medical Society of Victoria in 1979.

Jim Breheney died on 11th January 2024. He is survived by his wife of 63 years, Maureen Walsh and by three children, Kate, Nick, & Camilla, and his eight grandchildren. The Directors and Members of The Norman Beischer Medical Research Foundation note with sadness the death of Jim Breheney. Jim was a founding Director of the Foundation. He was a warm and engaging individual who provided sage advice and guidance over more than thirty years to the Chair and to his fellow Directors. Jim was a strong contributor to the Foundation's work to advance the health of women and their babies.

Last updated 9 May 2025.

Source: Deaths & Funerals 603728; Royal Children's Hospital alumni notes.

