

OBITUARY
DUNCAN SCOTT (SCOTT) STEVENSON
26 DECEMBER 1958 – 15 OCTOBER 2022
OTOLARYNGOLOGY HEAD AND NECK SURGEON

Dr Scott Stevenson was a gifted otolaryngology head and neck surgeon (OHNS), and outstanding teacher, mentor and role model to a generation of medical students, surgical Trainees and colleagues. With a dry and infectious sense of humour, he had a wonderfully welcoming personality. Despite his premature death from a brain tumour, he leaves a lasting legacy through his selfless contribution to the provision and promotion of the highest standards of OHNS and surgical care.

Dr Rachelle Love, a surgical colleague wrote: "His passing has left a deep hole in the forest of Tane. His legacy can be seen in the generations of doctors who try to follow his example of patient care, collegial support, surgical excellence and professionalism."

Duncan Scott Stevenson (known as Scott from childhood) was born in Blenheim, to Alan Stevenson and Mary (Ronald); the youngest of four children. He had two sisters, Sandra and Isla Jean, and a brother, John. Raised on the family farm in the Awatere Valley in Marlborough, Scott attended the small local primary school at Seddon. Winning a scholarship, he became a boarder at St Andrew's College in Christchurch, where he was a prefect, a member of the rugby 1st XV and finally Dux. The "tall lanky lock" became a prouder Cantabrian than those born there. At a school dance he met Anna-Mary Anderson, a boarder at St Margaret's College, and a life-long partnership began.

Scott commenced medical intermediate at Otago University in 1977, gaining entry to medical school the following year, while Anna-Mary chose home science and became a teacher. After spending his first year in Unicol, like so many others he flatted for the rest of his time in Dunedin. Completing his final year at the Christchurch School of Medicine in 1982, he was awarded his MB ChB with distinction and received the Ardagh Memorial Prize as the top student in the final year of training. Scott and Anna-Mary married in 1984 and subsequently had three children – Sarah-Jayne, Jonathan and Thomas.

Scott served his two house surgeon years in Christchurch and, after entering the OHNS training programme, he spent time in Christchurch and Dunedin before being awarded his Fellowship of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons in 1990. Awarded the Graham Aitken Nuffield medical post-graduate travelling scholarship in 1991, Scott worked for two years as a Fellow in Birmingham, England, where he gained extensive experience in rhinology and sinus surgery, as well as head and neck surgery and tertiary paediatric OHNS. He returned to Aotearoa New Zealand in 1993 and was appointed as an otolaryngology head and neck surgeon at Christchurch Hospital and clinical lecturer at the Christchurch School of Medicine. At the same time he joined Rob Allison in what was initially a small private practice in St George's Hospital, later moving to Leinster Rd, Caledonian Rd and lastly Forte 2 in Peterborough St. However, Scott's main energy and interest was in his public hospital appointment.

Scott had many strengths, but one of his greatest was his teaching. A brilliant teacher, both formal and informal, Scott influenced whole generations of medical students, surgical trainees and fellow surgeons. Whether in a lecture theatre, an outpatient clinic, operating theatre, or on a ward round, he was always willing to share his breadth and depth of knowledge – be it with medical students, junior doctors or colleagues. His teaching was clear, precise and based on extensive experience.

In addition he managed to serve the people of Christchurch for nearly 30 years as a respected surgeon in both the public and private sector. Scott was a true general otolaryngologist and although his areas of interest were in advanced rhinology and surgery in the management of sleep disturbance, he was an expert in all aspects of OHNS. Throughout his career he unreservedly gave his time and attention without any need for affirmation or compensation. There will be very few practising otolaryngologists in Aotearoa New Zealand who have not been influenced by Scott as a teacher, examiner or trusted colleague. A colleague said recently: "When I have a difficult clinical situation I still say to myself, 'what would Scott do?'".

One of those truly genuine individuals, Scott's dry wit and sense of humour always made one feel welcome and at ease and it helped keep him level-headed and grounded. Dr Rob Allison, his close colleague of 27 years, noted: "Scott was so much more than a high achiever.

"He had a vast intellect, an enquiring mind and a marvelous memory. Committed to the highest standards of patient care, he was thorough and conscientious in his assessment of patients. He was very popular and a soft touch with them. As a surgeon, he made sound decisions; he was meticulous and careful. Surgery was always thoroughly planned and carried out with great technical expertise, resulting in good outcomes and low complication rates.

"Although his main interest was complex nose and sinus surgery, his extensive training meant that he could turn his hand to any branch of ENT Surgery. His skill and reputation led to him often having to deal with complex or revision cases.

"Scott loved working with colleagues and had strong enduring relationships with other specialists. We operated in adjacent rooms in Christchurch Hospital on Tuesdays and at some stage during the day Scott would pop into my theatre to observe me operating. He wouldn't say anything for a couple of minutes, but then would come out with some really sound comment, such as 'would you consider a retrograde rather than antegrade dissection of the facial nerve?' or 'wouldn't it be easier to isolate the internal jugular vein at the skull-base?' These comments were based on his clear analysis of a particular situation and were invariably helpful."

Scott was the author of more than 20 publications in refereed journals, five book chapters and numerous articles in non-refereed publications. As an invited speaker, he delivered more than 70 presentations at various national and international conferences. He was an invited referee for the *New Zealand Medical Journal*, the *Australia and New Zealand Journal of Surgery* and *Clinical Otolaryngology*.

During his career Scott filled multiple roles and tirelessly strived for the betterment of his specialty and surgery in general. Soon after commencing work in Christchurch, Scott was appointed as the local Supervisor of Training, and during the next 13 years served as Secretary and then Chair of the Training, Education and Accreditation Committee. From there it was a natural progression to examining in OHNS for RACS for nine years, culminating in the role of Senior Examiner from 2016 to 2018, and then Deputy Chair of the Court of the Examiners from 2019 to 2021. In each of these roles Scott provided sage advice.

Scott was the Clinical Director of the Christchurch OHNS Department from 2007 to 2014, and served on the Surgical Executive of the Canterbury District Health Board between 2011 and 2014. He was Chair of the Canterbury Branch of the Association of Salaried Medical Specialists from 1996 to 2000, and a member of the Clinical Governance Committee at Southern Cross Hospital in Christchurch between 1997 to 2022. He contributed significantly to the then New Zealand National Board (now Aotearoa New Zealand National Committee) of RACS, serving as an elected member between 2007 and 2014 including two years as Chair (2011-2013). Scott was equally active as a member of the New Zealand Society of Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgery, serving as an executive member of the Society (2000-2006), and being elected President at the end of 2021. He sadly had to step down from that role in June 2022 as his health deteriorated.

Professor Chris Pyke, RACS Vice President and past Chair of the Court of Examiners, most aptly describes Scott on our behalf: "To say that Scott held the respect of his peers would be to understate his almost immeasurably large contribution to this College of Surgeons.

"He was a recognised leader from an early stage in his career, and he rose to senior positions including chairmanships and presidencies of his surgical society, the Aotearoa New Zealand National Committee, and the Court of Examiners. To each of these groups, he brought fearless devotion to the cause, a strong line on fairness and decency, a great sense of culture, a respect for our forebears, and a

wonderful insistence on not leaving anyone behind. He brought ‘can do’ attitude in spades. His strength and support made the work of any team to which he belonged easier.”

Scott was the recipient of a number of awards. He was awarded a Presidential Citation from the New Zealand OHNS Society not once, but twice, in recognition of his major contribution to the education and training of Trainees, his commitment to high standards of clinical Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgery in Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia and his outstanding service as an office bearer. In 2017 he was awarded the prestigious RACS Medal, for services to surgical education.

Despite his enormous commitment of time to the provision of patient care and teaching, Scott remained a proud family man. His son Jonathan observed that throughout their lives their father was always a constant reassuring presence.

“From music recitals to sports matches, he was our biggest supporter, and he was always there to help with tricky homework.”

He sometimes seemed like a bit of a superhero and Jonathon recalled the occasion where he and sister Sarah-Jayne, out for an evening run with their father, witnessed a burglary in progress at a school.

“Dad galloped after the closest offender and after what may well have been his fastest ever 800 metre performance, took down the thief in a textbook tackle, before restraining them in the front yard of a terrified local resident until the police arrived.”

Away from work Scott’s greatest pleasure was time spent with Anna-Mary maintaining an enormous garden and an immaculate lawn.

“He was a lawn man – he loved his lawn.”

A keen and capable rugby player at school, throughout his time at university and finally as a member of Christchurch Medical School’s Teratomas rugby team, Scott later continued this passion as a supporter of the Canterbury Crusaders and of course All Blacks teams.

Scott died peacefully at home with his family on 15 October 2022 aged 63 after a year-long battle with a brain tumour. During his treatment he demonstrated his usual resilience, grit and determination. He was the dearly loved husband of Anna-Mary, much loved father of Sarah-Jayne, Jonathan, and Thomas, and father-in-law of Claire, and loved brother of Sandra, Isla Jean and John. He was the respected friend, colleague, and mentor to many.

Dr Allan Panting FRACS