WHO 60th Anniversary Global Health Histories Seminars

LUNCHTIME SEMINAR,
Thursday 20th November 2008
12.30 – 14.00, Library Meeting Room

The Rise of the Global Health Consultant:
The Life and Times of Brian Abel-Smith (1926-1996)
Presenter: Dr. Sally Sheard, Liverpool University, England

Brian Abel-Smith, a health economist and political adviser, was closely connected with the development of international health and social welfare policies in the 20th century. From his seminal research on the cost of the British National Health Service in 1956, he quickly developed a reputation within WHO for his valuable reports and advice.

His research focused on the determinants of health, health service planning and financing, and securing user-friendly services. He pioneered international comparisons on health services finance for WHO, and visited over 80 countries on WHO’s behalf. From 1983-86 he was a senior adviser to WHO Director-General Halfdan Mahler on the economic strategy for the Health For All programme.

This talk uses the historical context of Abel-Smith’s work to provoke discussion on contemporary issues for WHO: how it solicits advice from external consultants, how networks of knowledge develop, and the capacity of individuals to effect change within global systems.

Dr Sally Sheard is Senior Lecturer in the History of Medicine at the University of Liverpool, and Visiting Fellow at the London School of Economics. She is currently writing a biography of Brian Abel-Smith.

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