

Long-time director of RAH Child Development Unit

Richard Cockington
OAM, MBBS, FRACP

1942-2018

THE AMA(SA) and the wider South Australian health community was deeply saddened to hear of the passing, on 22 February, of Dr Richard Cockington OAM.

Richard was one of South Australia's leading paediatricians for more than 40 years.

Born in Adelaide in 1942 to Frank and Isabelle Cockington, he studied at Renmark Primary School and attended St Peters College for high school.

He went on to study medicine at Adelaide University, and while he was covering physiotherapy as part of his studies, he met Penny Naylor. The couple married in 1965.

After medical school, Richard worked in general practice in Adelaide, and the couple's first son Nigel was born in 1967. Two more sons followed – Anthony in 1970 and Jason in 1980.

In 1970, the young family moved to Port Augusta, to work in the general practice there. In this role, Richard became involved with the Royal Flying Doctor Service. This experience had a profound impact on him when he saw that people living in isolated rural parts of Australia had a very different level of access to healthcare than those in urban areas.

He went on to have an outstanding career as a clinician and senior leader with the Women's and Children's Health Network over several decades. He held a range of positions, including director of Ambulatory Paediatric Services, head of the Adolescent Ward, head of Neurology, and executive director, Medical Services before his retirement.

He had a key role in the establishment of the Child Development Unit at the WCH, and was its long-time director. In this role he played a very important

part in the development of services for developmentally delayed children living outside the metropolitan area.

Richard had an interest in the treatment of neonatal jaundice and, in 1979, he published nomograms for the use of phototherapy, often referred to as the 'Cockington Charts', which were widely adopted.

He was actively involved in teaching, serving as a clinical senior lecturer, Department of Paediatrics with the University of Adelaide's Faculty of Medicine, and later as visiting lecturer at Flinders University School of Medicine's Department of Paediatrics. He also the Adelaide Children's Hospital director, Basic Physician Training, Royal Australasian College of Physicians in the early 1980s; and also a Foundation Fellow of the Australian College of Emergency Medicine.

Richard was honoured with professional awards from the Royal Australasian College of Medical Administrators and Autism SA, and, in this year's Australia Day Honours, received a Medal of the



Order of Australia (OAM) for service to medicine as a paediatrician.

Outside of medicine, Richard was a keen gardener and enjoyed camping holidays, both locally and in the United States, with his family. He spent 10 years as a leader with the Centennial Park Sea Scouts in the 1980s, when his boys were involved.

He was also a member of the Rotary Club of Adelaide, which he joined in 1987, and a convenor of the Australian Rotary Health Committee for 10 years as well as being a member of that committee for 20 years.

The AMA(SA) expresses its deepest condolences to Richard's family, friends and professional colleagues.

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