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Memories of John William Powles (1943-2018)

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During the Calisia World Conference on Family Health on 9-10 June 2019 in Kalisz, Poland [1], I dedicated my welcome lecture entitled “One hundred years of health in Poland” to the memory John Powles.

John Powles, MB BS MA FFPH, was a Senior Lecturer in Public Health Medicine, Department of Public Health and Primary Care, Institute of Public Health, Cambridge, UK. John was also my mentor, colleague, and friend. Thanks to John and Tony McMichael, I was able to publish my first important English-language scientific paper. Later, John and I spent a few years working together on a report on the health Iron Curtain still dividing Europe, which remains one of the most significant and cherished pieces of research I have been involved in: the HEM – Closing the Gap – Project [2].

John was a Principal Co-Investigator of the HEM project. *HEM – Closing the Gap – Reducing Premature Mortality. Baseline for Monitoring Health Evolution Following Enlargement* was a three-year project no. 2003121 submitted within a framework of the Public Health Program 2003-2008, DG Sanco [2]. John was also a member of the project’s Expert Group. His great expertise in the nutritional factors underpinning cardiovascular diseases, his active participation in preparing the individual

reports, scientific papers, and especially the HEM Blueprint Chapter “Policy implications and recommendations”, were invaluable for the success of this important project. The HEM report went on to become one of the fundamental studies describing the health differences between Eastern and Western Europe and outlining the public health strategy to close this gap.



PHOTO 1. Golden Honorary Awards of the Health Promotion Foundation

Joint publications:

Zatoński W, McMichael AJ, Powles JW. Ecological study of reasons for sharp decline in mortality from ischaemic heart disease in Poland since 1991. *BMJ* 1998; 316: 1047-1051.

McMichael A, Zatoński W. Environmental, behavioral, and socioeconomic influences: tackling the historical jigsaw puzzle of health in Central and Eastern Europe. *Int J Occup Environ Health* 1996; 2: 161-163.

Didkowska J, Mańczuk M, McNeill A, Powles J, Zatoński W. Lung cancer mortality at ages 35-54 in the European Union: ecological study of evolving tobacco epidemics. *BMJ* 2005; 331: 189-191.

Powles JW, Zatoński W, Vander Hoorn S, Ezzati M. The contribution of leading diseases and risk factors to excess losses of healthy life in Eastern Europe: burden of disease study. *BMC Public Health* 2005; 5: 116.

Rehm J, Sulikowska U, Mańczuk M, Boffetta P, Powles J, Popova S, Zatoński W. Alcohol accounts for a high proportion of premature mortality in central and eastern Europe. *Int J Epidemiol* 2007; 36: 458-467.

Zatoński WA, Manczuk M, Powles J, Negri E. Convergence of male and female lung cancer mortality at younger ages in the European Union and Russia. *Eur J Pub Health* 2007; 17: 450-454.

Powles J, Shroufi A, Mathers C, Zatoński W, La Vecchia C, Ezzati M. National cardiovascular prevention should be based on absolute disease risks, not levels of risk factors. *Eur J Public Health* 2009; 20: 103-106.

John was a mentor to many Central and Eastern European scientists and scholars, especially in Bulgaria and Poland, and his influence on developing European epidemiology cannot be overemphasised. In 2019, the Health Promotion Foundation awarded John with its Golden Honorary Award for his substantial contribution to public health research in Poland and Eastern Europe (Photo 1).

I asked John's family and colleagues to prepare his curriculum vitae that would accompany this tribute to his life and work (see article: *John William Powles obituary (1943-2018)* on pages 115-116) [3].

DISCLOSURE

The author reports no conflict of interest.

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3. Brayne C, Gouda HN. John William Powles obituary (1943-2018). *J Health Inequal* 2019; 5: 115-116.