

Charles-Bridges Webb Award

Jon Emery

It was with great surprise and delight to hear that I had been, first nominated, and then awarded the Charles-Bridges Webb Medal. But I was then faced with a dilemma: to attend the award ceremony in Sydney or my mother-in-law's 80th birthday party in England. Avoiding any risk of cracking mother-in-law jokes, or hints of battles between Australia and England with the Lions and Ashes tours in full swing, I'm afraid that England won this time. And so it was with great regret that I could not accept the award in person at the AAPC annual dinner, but for which I am truly very grateful and honoured.

I have only been working in academic primary care in Australia for just under nine years and it still feels invigoratingly new and exciting. I am therefore especially indebted for this recognition as I still feel a bit like a new kid on the block.

I sadly never had a chance to meet Charles Bridges-Webb although of course I am very familiar with his many achievements. A true grandfather of academic primary care in this country who I know inspired many people into their choice of career.

As a good academic, before writing this, I inevitably had to do a bit of a literature review of Charles' various obituaries and discovered at least a few commonalities and opportunities when our paths almost crossed, give or take a few hundred miles perhaps. Apparently Charles was on his first sabbatical in England in the year I was born, but I don't think he ever made it to Shoreham-by-Sea where the beaches are not quite as enticing as in his native land. My first time working in Australia was shortly after Charles had retired from his Chair at Sydney University. A rather fresh-faced pom straight out of GP training I brought my pregnant wife and toddler out here so I could be a rural GP in NSW and it was during this time that I developed a growing interest in a career in 'organised curiosity' as Charles described research.

I won't bore you all with the intervening years of my academic career. Suffice to say that it was the best career decision I could have made to be an academic GP, and returning to Australia has also worked out pretty well too. I've always been impressed by the collegiality of primary care researchers in Australia and how generously I was welcomed into the fold at meetings such as PHCRIS and through the A3PC membership.

Michael Kidd wrote the following in Charles' obituary:

'Charles was notable for his generosity in sharing his talents and his time, his patience with young researchers and his careful and meticulous approach to his research. Equally important was his loving partnership with his wife and his ability to balance his extraordinary professional contributions with a full and rewarding personal life.'

Those are qualities which, like many of you I expect, I hope to emulate.

Many thanks again for this award.