

# Amber Elizabeth Russel Young

1963-2022



Amber Elizabeth Russel Young was born on 4 January 1963 in St Helens Hospital, Carshalton. The daughter of John, a doctor, and Patricia, who had been a nurse. Amber was the eldest of three children and from an early age, she showed an interest in the nature of her parents' professions. Academically gifted, she excelled at Russell House Preparatory School in Sevenoaks before progressing to a scholarship at nearby Walthamstow Hall. She had a talent for languages, her initial choice for A Levels, but her father, noting her compassionate and enquiring nature, suggested a different path. He took her on a visit to St Thomas's Hospital and she was fascinated by the tumult and excitement of the Accident and Emergency Department. The experience was an epiphany that prompted an application to study medicine. She started at Bristol Medical School in 1981, graduating in 1987. During her elective she chose to go to Australia and worked at The Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne. She was drawn to paediatric anaesthesia. Colleagues noted that she was extremely able, often being sought out to assist with difficult cases, or simply appearing when she sensed a colleague in need of support. Her meticulous attention to detail and unwillingness to compromise were characteristic of Amber; her exacting vision of care would sometimes ruffle feathers, but it won many admirers. She was recognised as a stellar clinician who thrived under pressure, be it resuscitating a sick child or retrieving casualties with The Royal Flying Doctor Service in Western Australia.

On her return to the UK, she was appointed as a consultant anaesthetist at Frenchay Hospital in Bristol. With burn care becoming more centralised, as the lead for paediatric anaesthesia, she was pivotal in the development of the Bristol service, feeding in to the first national standards and establishing a dedicated HDU and PACU. She enjoyed her educational role and many of her trainees from this time were inspired to pursue a career in paediatric anaesthesia having been enthused by her passion for it. She flourished in local service lead roles before assuming the post of Clinical Lead for the South West UK Children's Burns Network. 2006 was marked by her first diagnosis of breast cancer, but Amber refused to be defined or constrained by the diagnosis. Her extraordinary resolve saw her timing chemotherapy around theatre lists and meetings – she reported that it gave her focus and moreover, that she could not countenance gaps in the timetable! With little fanfare and minimal absence, there was delight in her remission and rapid return.

With renewed vigour, her expertise was more nationally recognised. She stepped up to the BBA Executive, leading its Prevention Group from 2010 to 2014. Not satisfied with juggling exhaustive clinical and managerial responsibilities, it was at this juncture that Amber started to expand her interest in research. Her inquisitive nature had always led her to challenge dogma and, as Clinical Lead for The Healing Foundation Children's Burns Research Centre from 2012, latterly under the auspices of The Scar Free Foundation, she thrived. Starting with small, charitable grants, she oversaw studies that assessed practical questions, from wound dressings to determining the outcomes which mattered most to patients.

In 2014, with the reconfiguration of hospital services in Bristol, she gravitated to Bristol Royal Hospital for Children where her clinical commitments focused on neurosurgery and burns. A vocal advocate for burns as a speciality, it was a natural step for her to be elected as Chair of the BBA the same year, overlapping with her stewardship of the NHS England Burns Clinical Reference Group. This was a particularly active period for her research as she forged links with Universities in Bristol, Bath and Cardiff, national charities, leading burn services across the UK and importantly, patient groups. National grants from the NIHR and MRC attested to the importance of this work. Her co-ordinating role was exemplified by her tenure as Chair of the BBA Research Specialist Interest Group, commencing in 2015. The following year brought the devastating news that her cancer had returned and was incurable. She had just commenced reading for a PhD degree, but in typical fashion, organised her studies around a debilitating routine of chemo- and radiotherapy. Her thesis was wide in scope and profound in impact – surveying 700 clinicians in 77 countries – and distilled to a set of seven core outcomes, to guide the assessment of treatment and recovery, for the burn injured patient. She explored the topic eloquently in the AB Wallace Memorial Lecture at the BBA annual meeting in 2018 and was awarded Honorary Membership of the Association. In 2022, shortly before she passed away, she was awarded the position of Professor of Paediatric Burn Care at the University of Bristol in recognition of her achievements in the field.

Amber excelled due to a keen mind, clear focus and exceptional determination. She had a strong commitment to patient care and expected others to maintain her high standards, leading by example. She could not have achieved so highly without the bedrock of her devoted husband, Norman, who provided immense support, particularly during her final illness. Departed too soon, she will be profoundly missed by hospital colleagues and the wider burn community.