I was appointed Consultant Dermatologist at the Heatherwood and Wexham Park Hospitals Trust in April 1994. This was an eight session post and I ran clinics at Wexham Park, Slough and King Edward V11 Hospital, Windsor. Dr Angela Roberts covered St Mark’s, Maidenhead and Heatherwood Hospitals. My predecessor Myra McKelvie had retired from Wexham Park in 1992, and I worked as a locum from the end of 1992 till my permanent appointment.

When I arrived at Wexham Park there was one clinical assistant, George Smith, a retired GP with long experience in Dermatology. He left when I started the post full time and I was able to appoint Mandy Lambton as a clinical assistant. In those early days we had a rotating medical SHO in clinic once a week, which worked well, as each doctor did six months in this way. I was doing two clinics at Wexham Park, two at King Edward and a monthly vulval clinic at the Garden Clinic, Slough, the Centre for Sexual Health. I soon added a monthly children’s clinic, run in the Paediatric department. There was really no department as such when I arrived. The nursing staff in clinic were general nurses and although very competent, they had no special Dermatology skills. One of my first priorities was therefore to get a specialist nurse. While doing the locum post I had already put forward ideas to develop the department, and had lobbied for a UV machine and patch testing facilities. We managed to appoint Wendt Aston as a specialist nurse and we got a UVA machine. Wendy ran the PUVA service and the patch testing. Julius Parker, another GP who had the Diploma in Dermatology and had been working with Angela Roberts, transferred his session to Wexham Park and then added another in Windsor, which was an enormous help.

We were a very busy department but most of the time managed to keep the waiting list down to less than three months. Wendy left after a couple of years and we replaced her with Diane Hamdy, who had worked at the Garden Clinic in a senior role. She really made a success of her post over several years and introduced nurse led clinics and guidelines, and was a tremendous help to me in running the department.

I pressed hard to increase the staff numbers in the department and was very fortunate that several local GPs wished to work in Dermatology. Jackie Crawford had already obtained the Diploma in Dermatology, and turned out to be a godsend, starting as clinical assistant and eventually becoming Associate Specialist. Eileen Charig and Lisa Carpenter also joined as clinical assistants and both passed the Diploma. Claire Elliott and Krishna Singh from the Garden Clinic also did weekly sessions for a year or so. Mandy and Claire left after a couple of years, having been invaluable members of our growing team. Andrew Sherley-Dale, another GP, applied for a GPwSI post and he was a very quick learner. He took the Diploma and eventually left GP work to go back into general medicine to obtain MRCP. He is now an SpR in the Midlands. Diane left us in 2003 when she moved away from the area and was replaced by Shirley Brooks who carried on the PUVA and patch testing. By then we also had a TL01 machine.

I never did get a consultant colleague, despite repeated promises by management, which were always withdrawn at the last minute. The management of the hospital and of the Department of Medicine, didn’t regard our speciality as important, and the personnel changed so often that it was impossible to build up any rapport or support. George Smith returned to cover Heatherwood after Jane Rosbotham had held the fort for a while after Angela’s retirement, but he unfortunately died in 2005. Another GP, Julian Habershon, had run the clinic at St Mark’s for about 20 years, with John Wilkinson coming down
from Amersham once a month. I really couldn’t have managed without the support of those wonderful GPs, and it was impossible to run all four hospitals in the trust. By the time I retired in September 2005, there were nine doctors working sessions with me, and it was a thriving department, of which I was proud. Everyone really had to take some responsibility, and in fact they seemed to thrive on it.

Throughout my time in the trust, I encouraged GPs and their trainees, SHOs, students and junior doctors to attend clinics and learn from us and this was a very popular activity. I did a talk on cryotherapy on the annual surgery course for GP trainees, and also ran a couple of study days for nurses and many days for the GP trainees. I was chair of the south eastern vulval group and hosted over 100 doctors and nurses to a study day in 1995, and we held regular quarterly meetings as well. We had a monthly departmental lunch, which one member of staff would run each time.

My special interests in Dermatology are vulval skin diseases, hair loss and Paediatric dermatology, but I love the general dermatology and am much happier in a clinical setting than in a lab.

I first became interested in Dermatology while a student at the Royal Free. Tony Burns, Helena Barnes, Charles Calnan and Imrich Sarkany were such enthusiastic teachers and our curriculum gave us an unusually long session on Dermatology. I had originally planned to do chemical pathology, having done a BSc in Biochemistry after Second MB, but after the Dermatology sessions I changed my mind. I did my elective at St John’s Institute of Dermatology and then obtained an SHO post there in 1976. I did my registrar training at St Mary’s under Lionel Fry and the Royal Berks, Reading under Ron Emmerson and Martin James. I then did some clinical research in the use of Minoxidil in androgenic alopecia at Wycombe General. SR training was at Amersham and High Wycombe under John Wilkinson and Fenella Wojnarowska, under the part-time womn’s scheme.

Gerald Levene at St John’s and Fenella Wojnarowska and John Wilkinson at Amersham were the biggest help with my training and taught me so much. They were all great teachers and diagnosticians. I think my SHO post at St John’s was the biggest help of all as I saw so much and worked with so many specialists.

I retired aged 55 from the NHS in 2005, as my husband had already retired earlier that year. We have always loved to travel and this has enabled me to do more of that. My interests are travel, especially for wildlife, photography and collecting travel books and postcards. I still do private work in Windsor and Maidenhead, which I enjoy tremendously. I was the first in my family to go into Medicine, a decision I suddenly arrived at in the Lower Sixth at school. I had to then do science O Levels and then go to the local Tech to do the A levels. I also did French A level, and have always loved languages. My husband is non medical. One daughter is a Physiotherapist and the other works in IT, as did my husband. We have just had our first grandchild.