



## Jennifer (Lewis) Learmont AM Hon MD '55

Jennifer's professional career has been in areas of Public Health, specifically related to infectious disease such as HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis but also HIV counselling and Mental Health. She is currently a member of the NSW Mental Health Tribunal, on the advisory committee for the Centre for Emotional Health, Macquarie University, is Vice President of Mental Health Carers NSW, (formerly Arafmi NSW), and is a member of several other NSW mental health peak bodies.

Jenny joined the Australian Red Cross Service in 1985 where, as the first Head of the Look-Back Department, she set up Look-Back/Tracing procedures for HIV transfusion transmitted infections.

She identified a group of symptomless transfusion infected recipients who, together with their well common donor, became known internationally as the Sydney Blood Bank Cohort (SBBC).

The SBBC was shown to have a unique non-virulent strain of HIV virus and for many years Jenny led a research team into the long term non-progression of HIV in the SBBC. Her publications include articles in *The Lancet*, *Science* and the *New England Journal of Medicine* as well as joint-authorship of numerous articles in international and national journals.

She was appointed to the NSW Ministerial Advisory Committee on AIDS, and Chair of the Ministerial Sub-Committee on "Community Health and Social Issues" on AIDS Policy. Jenny is now an Honorary Associate of the Centre for Virus Research at the Westmead Millennium Institute.

For forty years Jenny has been a carer of a son who developed Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) at the age of 13 and later developed other related mental disorders, and resorted to drug and alcohol misuse. In 1990 she set up support groups and self-help groups for those with OCD and other anxiety disorders, and their carers and friends. In 2000 she introduced an early intervention programme on anxiety disorders for primary-school teachers and parents.

In 2005 she was a founding member and then Chair of the NSW Consumers Advisory Committee on Mental Health and in 2006 Jenny commenced The Anxiety Disorders Association NSW Inc. to work with state and community groups.

In 1996 she was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia (AM). She has also been admitted to the degree of Doctor of Medicine, *Honoris Causa*, at the University of New South Wales for eminent service to the community.