Dr Thomas Stuttaford is one of the last of the old school of gentlemen general medical practitioners who combine a vast general knowledge of their subject with a keen interest and delight in human nature and all its foibles. Despite his GP practice, and 1970–74 career as Conservative MP for Norwich South, Stuttaford is best known as The Times doctor. Stuttaford wrote a regular, often daily, column for The Times for an impressive 27 years, from the early 1980s on, when well over a million Times readers enjoyed his lively, well-written health pages and advice. Other popular medical columns followed, in publications as diverse as The Oldie and Eile. Known to his many friends, patients and Times colleagues as the ‘amazing Doctor Tom’, Stuttaford has always been generous with his time, sage, pragmatic advice, and introductions to his encyclopaedic medical address book, crammed with the leading specialists in every field of medicine.

Tall, courteous, imposing, yet charming, and with intense, yet twinkly, eyes behind his trademark half-moon spectacles, Stuttaford is always impeccably dressed, with a dashing, almost Edwardian elegance and a seemingly endless collection of dark, pin-striped suits and waistcoats. Unlike some of his generation of colleagues who found it hard to digest and adapt to the latest medical techniques and research, Stuttaford embraced the new with gusto. At heart, though, his patients and colleagues always felt that one of Stuttaford’s greatest strengths was his old-fashioned, chivalrous warmth, plain speaking, and ability to assess and diagnose patients, be they commoners or kings, without always resorting to science.

Born in 1931 in a remote, rural corner of east Norfolk, where his father, uncle and grandfather had all been doctors before him, it was perhaps inevitable that Tom would take the same path. In fact, Tom was the fourth generation of his family to become a doctor. Educated at Gresham’s School, Holt, where he was head boy and captain of rugby, Stuttaford was a studious boy who devoured ‘a book a day’. No one was surprised when he went up to Brasenose College, Oxford, to read medicine. It was here that Stuttaford first started to write on medical matters, culminating in his editorship of the British Medical Students Journal.

Called up for 2 years of National Service with the Tenth Royal Hussars, followed by Territorial Army service with the Scottish Horse, he qualified as a doctor in 1959, working at first in west London in the prestigious Hammersmith Hospital for 3 years. Turning down the offers of a lucrative Knightsbridge or Harley Street practice, Stuttaford returned to his roots, the family practice in Norfolk, where he remembered treating tuberculosis patients with streptomycin and inserting drainage tubes into the swollen legs of those suffering from congestive cardiac failure. Reportedly, no one had opened a medical textbook for more than 40 years in this sleepy, east Norfolk country practice.

Stuttaford had the great good sense to marry his beloved wife Pamela Ropner in 1957, who became an international, best-selling author of five children’s books, and, in between, to produce three boys: Andrew, Thomas and Hugo. Stuttaford liked to grumble that Pam was ‘a high-maintenance wife’ just because she insisted on a gardener, but the couple, married for 56 years, were devoted to each other and did up ruined, historic houses together, in and around Norwich, to help pay the school fees. When Tom decided to combine several careers as GP, medical writer and Conservative politician, Pamela was asked how she was faring as a politician’s wife. She responded that, ‘compared to being a GP’s wife, life as an MP’s wife is bliss’. Sadly, Pamela died in 2013, after a lengthy illness, during which she was nursed by Tom. It says much for Dr Tom’s resilience, energy and pragmatism that, even in his 80s, and as a member of seven different clubs, including The Garrick and The Athenaeum, he managed to bounce back from his wife’s death, going out to lunches and dinners with his wide circle of friends, many of whom remarked how sprightly and well he looked, despite his years.
Dr Tom is justifiably proud of his career in politics. As an MP in Ted Heath’s government, Stuttaford was one of the first to recognise the potential of Margaret Thatcher, and was one of an influential group of MPs who were responsible for her eventually becoming Leader of the Conservative party, and subsequently Prime Minister. After losing his seat for Norwich South, Dr Tom contested two subsequent elections in the Isle of Ely, as the Conservative candidate. Despite being defeated on both occasions, at the first, Stuttaford won the largest swing to the Conservative party in the country and, at the second, won the highest number of Conservative votes ever recorded in his Isle of Ely constituency.

For all his political clout, it was medicine and giving people access to the right treatment that mattered most to Stuttaford. Dr Tom was contacted by Harry Evans, the then Editor of The Sunday Times, to help with the thalidomide campaign, and eventually to win justice and compensation for the victims and their families. Stuttaford never lost his campaigning zeal, nor his determination, throughout his careers, to give something back to those less fortunate. During his life, this included patients in the east end of London, where he worked as a genitourinary doctor at The Royal London and Queen Mary’s Hospitals, plus Moorfields Eye Hospital.

Stuttaford developed a special interest in PSA tests, which enabled doctors to detect prostate cancer at an early stage when it could still be cured. The latter cause led to frequent articles in The Times featuring new developments in prostate cancer, still the biggest killer of men in this country. Sadly, his own brother, Sir William Stuttaford, developed metastatic prostate cancer, which was diagnosed by Dr Tom. Prompted by his brother’s results, Dr Tom also had a prostate biopsy, confirming the presence of prostate cancer. Subsequently, he underwent open radical prostatectomy and wrote an article about his surgery in The Times; this personal experience encouraged him to help mastermind the Prostate Research Campaign UK in the 1980s. After a number of mergers, the charity evolved into the current, successful, Prostate Cancer UK. Stuttaford also supported the growth and development of The Urology Foundation (TUF), a charity that raises funds for research and training into prostate, bladder, kidney and testicular cancer.

In 1996 he received an OBE for his services to politics, having served at every level of government from parish council through to MP, before continuing to work as a medical advisor to the Conservative central office until 1997. Stuttaford saw private patients too and was also medical advisor to many different companies, including BUPA, the Rank Organisation and the Standard Chartered Bank, well beyond retirement age.

Apart from medicine, politics, charity and his family, Dr Tom is a keen countryman and also did his bit to support drinkers, who he felt were hard done by, writing a short book on the benefits of alcohol entitled ‘To Your Good Health: The Wise Drinker’s Guide’. Ahead of his time, as usual, he was one of the first to express the view that, taken in moderation, wine could be beneficial to one’s health. And so say all of us. Bravo, Dr Tom!
A profile of Dr Thomas Stuttaford - GP, author, medical columnist of The Times and former Conservative MP. Discover the world’s research. 17+ million members. Stuttaford qualified as a doctor in 1959, working at the Hammersmith Hospital before joining his uncle's general practice in rural east Norfolk. Later he helped set up a general practice in Norwich where he remained until being elected as an MP in 1970. He continued practicing medicine as a consultant for Bupa for most of his time in parliament. After losing his seat, Stuttaford remained with BUPA for quite a few more years, but took on other medical jobs including acting as medical adviser to a number of companies, and specializing in genitourinary medicine at the Royal London and Queen ... "Unsung heroes: Dr Thomas Stuttaford". Trends in Urology & Men's Health. 6 (2): 42â€“43. doi:10.1002/tre.452. Dr. Thomas To Advance Global Cross-Cultural Business Education Boston University Questrom School of Business announced today that Howard Thomas, Ph.D., strategic management and management education author and scholar, will join The Case For Keeping Coins Around In The United States. In a new op-ed published by CNN Business, BU Questrom™s Jay Zagorsky warns that despite a COVID-19 induced coin shortage, a cashless economy would have unintended consequences. Dr Thomas Stuttaford , who has died aged 87, was from 1970 to 1974 Conservative MP for Norwich South, but he was best known as a sage and urbanely good-humoured medical correspondent who wrote for The Oldie for 26 years and The Times for nearly 30 years, as well as for numerous other publications. The son and grandson of doctors, Stuttaford was a gentleman general practitioner of the old school who combined comprehensive knowledge with deep sympathy for, and fascination with, human frailty in all its manifestations. Unsung Heroes: #2. Vasili Arkhipov, a senior officer on a Soviet submarine, refused his captain's orders to launch a nuclear torpedo at U.S. prevented WW3. Russia saw him as a coward and traitor, but his wife and others saw him as a hero. He averted another major war and saved millions of lives.(source). 3. Nils Bohlin saved millions of lives with his invention of the modern, three-point safety seat belt while working at Volvo.