Professor Gavin C. Arneil (1923–2018)

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Gavin Cranston Arneil: Born March 7, 1923; Died January 21, 2018

Professor Gavin Arneil, who has died aged 94, was a pioneer in the field of paediatric nephrology. He established the first specialist children's kidney unit in the United Kingdom and went on to found the British Association for Paediatric Nephrology, the European Society for Paediatric Nephrology and International Paediatric Nephrology Association.

Born in Bearsden near Glasgow in 1923, his father a university senior lecturer and mother an infant school teacher, he was educated at Jordanhill College School and Glasgow University from 1940 to 45 where he was a member of the Home Guard. He went on to serve for 3 years in the Royal Army Medical Corp (M.E.L.F.) then as a major in War Office Research Staff where he undertook research in nutrition gaining an M.D. from the University of Glasgow.

He trained in paediatrics in Glasgow under the formidable James Hutchison. He was appointed as consultant to the Royal Hospital for Sick Children and rapidly developed a special interest in kidney disease. His research led to a better understanding of the underlying pathology of kidney disease by his

promotion of the use of kidney biopsy. He was greatly influenced by the pioneering work of Henry Barnett in New York and undertook research into vasopressin, which led to a PhD. He won research prizes which allowed him to travel widely in Europe and beyond following which foreign doctors began to visit Glasgow to train in paediatric nephrology.

He was also interested in rickets which was a particular problem, especially in the immigrant population in Glasgow and he managed to virtually eliminate this very preventable disease. However a decade later it reappeared in Pakistani adolescents. He helped solve this problem with an educational cartoon dubbed in Hindi and Urdu which was played between the main feature films in the Cosmo cinema: rickets disappeared. He pioneered BCG vaccination for children in Glasgow seeing pre-school tuberculous become a disease of the past. He established the Scottish Cot Death Trust and fought successfully to keep it separate from that south of the border. He was an excellent clinician who always had children's best interests at heart.

In 1950, working with Dr. Derrie MacDonald, a pathologist and Dr. L.P. Studzinski, a microbiologist, Gavin set up one of the first paediatric renal units in Europe at the Royal Hospital for Sick Children in Glasgow. He published many papers in paediatric nephrology, including a study of 164 children with nephrotic syndrome which was published in the *Lancet* in 1961. In the 1960s the unit pioneered the use of peritoneal dialysis for acute renal failure.

In 1956 and 1958 Gavin attended the National Nephrosis Foundation meetings in New York permitting visits to paediatric nephrology units in North America, establishing links across the Atlantic that lasted for years. In 1966 participants from North America and Europe met to form the International Study of Kidney Disease in Children (ISKDC) which carried out clinical studies; those in nephrotic syndrome form the basis of our understanding of nephrotic syndrome and continue to influence practice today.

The same year, Gavin met Prof Harmen Tiddens from Utrecht in Belgium at the European Society for Endocrinology in Glasgow, and discussed the need for

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a European Society for Paediatric Nephrology. Later that year they met to form a constitution and write to paediatric nephrologists or paediatricians known to be interested in the field. Their efforts resulted in an inaugural meeting held on the 17th September 1967 in the Department for Child Health at the University of Glasgow. Thirty-six of the 46 founding members attended and over 3 days topics covered all aspects of paediatric nephrology including neonatal nephrotic syndrome, controlled trials of treatment in steroid resistant nephrotic syndrome, treatment of renal tubular acidosis in Fanconi syndrome as well as a demonstration of peritoneal dialysis. Social events included a tour of Scotland culminating in a group photo beside the iconic Forth Rail Bridge near Edinburgh. The society has since grown from strength to strength and we were honoured to have Gavin speak at the opening ceremony of the 50th Anniversary meeting of the ESPN in Glasgow in Sept 2017. He appreciated the opportunity to welcome ESPN members back to Glasgow where the society was founded. He recorded a video recollecting the early years of the ESPN which formed part of the Oral History of Paediatric Nephrology video which is available on the ESPN website.

Gavin retained links with North America and in 1969 he gave the guest lecture at the inaugural meeting of the American Society for Paediatric Nephrology where he was introduced as the father of Paediatric Nephrology in Europe. He went on to chair a group that drafted the constitution of the International Paediatric Nephrology Association (IPNA) and was elected its first secretary-general in 1974. He was due to take up office at the first meeting in Washington, but became unwell before his departure and required admission to hospital in Glasgow for surgery. He remained secretary-general of IPNA until 1983.

When his mentor Hutchison retired as the Samson Gemmell Professor of Paediatrics in Glasgow, Gavin was disappointed not to succeed him although he was awarded a personal chair. As a consequence he turned his efforts internationally, becoming the Secretary General, then President of the International Paediatric Association, the only Briton ever to hold this high office in its 100 year history. In his presidential term the annual meeting was in the Philippines, a highlight of which was Gavin Arneil dancing with Imelda Marcos at the annual dinner. His international work called on him to visit and advise in over 50 countries including many former iron curtain countries as well as Biafra during the war, Kampuchea and Bosnia during their troubles.

Although he was a devout Glaswegian, Gavin joined forces with Professor John Forfar from Edinburgh in 1974, to produce 'The textbook of Paediatrics', more commonly referred to as 'Forfar and Arneil', now in its 8th edition as the only non-American major textbook of paediatrics with over 100 contributors and 2000 pages.

He spent his retirement in Helensburgh near Glasgow, where he was a passionate member of the Friends of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs, becoming honorary president succeeding Sir Robert Grieve. He was awarded the St Mungo Prize in 1987 which is Glasgow's highest civic award. He had a good sense of humour, sailed, golfed, gardened, imported wine, quoted Burns freely and once even successfully treated a sick chimp at Glasgow Zoo.

He married his wife June, in Dunfermline Abbey, in 1971. They had one daughter and two grandchildren all of whom survive him. At his funeral, he was fondly remembered as a family man and a proud Scotsman.