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Professor Neil B. Pride (1931–2016)

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Neil Blair Pride, Emeritus Professor of Respiratory Medicine at Imperial College, died in Ealing on November 12th 2016 aged 85 years. He was a world-renowned respiratory physician and physiologist, who made enormous contributions to our understanding of common lung diseases.

Born in Croydon on July 29th 1931, to a general practitioner father, he was educated at Bryanston School, Dorset. He studied preclinical medicine at Christ's College, Cambridge and continued to clinical studies at St Mary's Medical School, London before qualifying as a doctor in 1956.

In 1962, after clinical training posts in London and Cambridge, he went to work with Solbert Permutt in the Department of Medicine at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. It was here that he developed his physiological research, and he and Sol published a landmark paper on the determinants of maximal expiratory flow from the lung [1]. This was followed by time spent with Julius H. Comroe Jr in the Cardiovascular Research Institute at the University of California, San Francisco. He returned to London in 1964 to work in a Medical Research Council (MRC) unit at King's College Hospital with Philip Hugh-Jones, beginning his long-time association with the MRC. He was promoted to Senior Lecturer and Honorary Consultant at King's in 1968. Later that year he moved to the Royal Postgraduate Medical School and Hammersmith Hospital as Senior Lecturer in Medicine, where he established his international reputation as a respiratory physiologist. He subsequently became Professor of Respiratory Medicine and Head of the Division of Respiratory Medicine, and remained at Hammersmith until his retirement in 1996. During his time there he became a guru of respiratory physiology and fostered the careers in respiratory medicine of many academics across the world. Neil was responsible for my own entry into respiratory research, which I was very reluctant to undertake. He was an outstanding mentor and support during my time as an MRC Research Fellow at Hammersmith. In 1996, he was elected Emeritus Professor of Respiratory Medicine at Imperial College and continued his physiological research in the National Heart and Lung Institute at the Royal Brompton Hospital, working with established researchers and students.

He was a respiratory physiologist who made major contributions in the field of lung mechanics, which helped to explain the mechanisms of airway narrowing in common lung diseases, such as asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). Neil was one of the first to do research in COPD, probing its underlying mechanisms and helping us to understand how treatments work. His scientific output dealt with the mechanics of every aspect of the respiratory system, from the nose to the diaphragm, including coughing. He was an outstanding intellect, who not only knew respiratory physiology better than anyone else, but was also knowledgeable about many other areas outside his own research field. He was extraordinarily well-read and had an amazing memory, never seeming to forget anything that he had heard.

He was a gifted teacher, able to simplify and communicate complex ideas in lung physiology, and he was a doctor much loved by his patients. For all his brilliance, he was a modest, generous person and an inspiring mentor to young researchers. His writing was as clear as his talks and he published many very influential papers, reviews, chapters and books. He co-edited the first large textbook on COPD, now in its second edition, and wrote a book on lung function with his long-term colleague Professor Mike Hughes. His last paper, written with Ann Watson on the history of COPD, was published this year [2].

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Professor Neil B. Pride MD, FRCP, FERS

He received many honours, including an honorary degree from Athens University in 1997, the British Thoracic Society (BTS) Medal in 2002 and the European Respiratory Society (ERS) Presidential Award in 2003. He was President of the BTS from 1992 to 1993 and was elected to the Fellowship of the ERS this year when, unfortunately, he was too ill to attend the ERS International Congress to receive it.

Neil Pride was one of the most influential thinkers of our time in academic respiratory medicine and was widely admired internationally for his insights and thoughtful contributions. He helped many people in their careers and was a continued source of inspiration to those who had the great fortune to work with him. He will be greatly missed by the international respiratory community.

He is survived by his wife Roma, his daughters Fiona and Catherine, and two grandchildren.

References

- 1 Pride NB, Permutt S, Riley RL, *et al.* Determinants of maximal expiratory flow from the lungs. *J Appl Physiol* 1967; 23: 646–662.
- 2 Watson RA, Pride NB. Early history of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease 1808–1980. *COPD* 2016; 13: 262–273.