

**MEMORIAL RESOLUTION OF THE FACULTY
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON**

ON THE DEATH OF PROFESSOR EMERITUS HENRY A. PETERS

Dr. Henry A. (Hank) Peters, professor emeritus of neurology and rehabilitation medicine at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health, died on June 5, 2010. He was an accomplished neurologist and clinical teacher, a nationally and internationally recognized expert and researcher in neuromuscular diseases and neurotoxicology, and was a foremost authority on diagnosis and management of porphyria, a metabolic disorder which produces a wide variety of systemic, neurological, and psychiatric symptoms.

Henry Peters was born on December 31, 1920 in Oconomowoc, Wisconsin, where he grew up, received his early education, and graduated from high school in 1938. He received a BA degree from the University of Wisconsin in Madison in 1943 and an MD degree in 1945. He interned at the Germantown Hospital and Dispensary in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Between 1946 and 1948 he was on active duty with the U.S. Navy Medical Corps. He completed residency training in neuropsychiatry in 1951 and then served his entire professional career of 47 years at the University of Wisconsin Medical School. He was appointed instructor in 1951, assistant professor of neuropsychiatry in 1953, associate professor of neurology in 1958, and in 1970 was promoted to the rank of professor in neurology, psychiatry, and rehabilitation medicine. He was board certified in both neurology and psychiatry. Dr. Peters was a fellow of the American College of Physicians, the American Psychiatric Association and the American Academy of Neurology. He served as president of the Wisconsin Neurological Society in 1985-1986.

Dr. Peter's writings on porphyria included studies on etiology, pathophysiological mechanisms, and clinical manifestations of the neurological and psychiatric symptoms. His studies demonstrated that porphyria could develop as a consequence of toxicological exposures. His career-long interest in porphyria began in the 1950s, and in the early 1960s he was invited to Turkey to help with investigations and treatment of patients who developed a form of porphyria from eating pesticide-treated grain. These investigations led to a series of papers on porphyria turcica caused by intoxication with hexachlorobenzene and described numerous neurological, psychiatric, visceral, dermatological, endocrinological, and orthopedic complications. He made many trips to Turkey during a period of 30 years, providing medical consultations to Turkish patients, pursuing longitudinal studies on porphyria, and advising Turkish physicians. In 1982 he published an extensive clinical and laboratory study of 161 patients who were followed for 25 years after toxic exposure. This longitudinal study was a seminal contribution on the epidemiology and medical toxicology of porphyria and continues as an important and influential description of the disorder. He frequently spoke of the deep affection he developed for his Turkish patients and the country of Turkey.

Dr. Peters made numerous other contributions to the field of neurotoxicology in papers on the medical complications of toxic exposures to arsenic, nitrous oxide, carbon tetrachloride, carbon disulfide, lithium, and other neurotoxic agents. He also published papers on a wide spectrum of neuromuscular conditions such as Guillain-Barré Syndrome, spinal muscular atrophy and other motor neuron syndromes, inflammatory myopathy, muscular dystrophies, and other myopathies. He was one of the first clinicians who recognized the importance and clinical utility of measuring the levels of serum enzymes in the evaluation and counseling of possible carriers of the gene for muscular dystrophy.

Dr. Peters started the Muscular Dystrophy Association Clinic at the University of Wisconsin Hospital in 1956 and directed this clinic for over three decades, establishing a reputation for quality of patient care and research that contributed to the clinic's national stature and reputation. He was respected as a dedicated physician, an astute clinician with keen observational skills, and for his emphasis on holistic approaches to the care of patients with chronic, progressive neurological disabilities. He was absolutely devoted to his patients and their families, and they loved and trusted him. Even many years after his retirement, his patients would call him or send letters asking for advice, wondering "if he agrees with their new doctor." Dr. Peters advised and trained generations of scientists and physicians in the field of neuromuscular diseases. He was polite, kind, and generous in sharing his experiences and expertise with students, residents and colleagues. He volunteered his time freely for many patient support groups and organizations such as the Muscular Dystrophy Association and the March of Dimes.

Dr. Peters was firmly committed to advancing medical care in developing countries and was a co-founder of the Wisconsin-Nicaragua Partners of the Alliance for Progress, serving as president of that organization between 1969 and 1981. After the 1972 earthquake, he led the state of Wisconsin's relief effort, helping to coordinate shipment of medical supplies to facilities in Nicaragua. In 1981, he was honored by the governor and the Wisconsin state legislature with a special tribute for his many years of dedicated leadership of the Wisconsin-Nicaragua Partners. The alliance and other associations from Wisconsin and elsewhere continue to commit effort for the realization of this important mission.

Hank had a passion for singing and loved opera. He had a beautiful baritone voice and performed for many years with the Madison Symphony and Chorus as well as Madison Opera. Together with some of his colleagues he would frequently entertain faculty and staff of the Department of Neurology with singing during holidays or other significant occasions.

Dr. Peters was beloved by his patients and was a valued mentor for generations of medical students, residents, and fellows, providing guidance and perspective for many younger colleagues throughout their careers. He was a person of highest professional and moral standards, and we miss his irrepressible enthusiasm and optimism.

MEMORIAL COMMITTEE

Raymond Chun

Thomas Sutula

Andrew Waclawik, chair