

In Memoriam

Sadly, Dr. Wm Arnold died on July 20th, a week after his 88th birthday. Bill was a great friend to us all.

Obituary in the Vancouver Sun



Dr. William Arnold (July 10 1929 – July 20 2017)

Bill was a first class pediatrician, deeply committed to the care of his patients and families. He graduated from the University of British Columbia medical school in 1955, and completed a rotating internship in London, Ontario before practicing as a family doctor in Prince Rupert from 1957 to 1965. He then completed his pediatric residency training at the Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center in New York City from 1965 to 1968 before returning to join Drs. Robert Maclean and Jack Whitelaw in general pediatric practice in Vancouver. Inspired by what he had seen in New York, he established the first Canadian multidisciplinary spina bifida clinic in Vancouver and then served as medical

director for 30 years. He was the first Canadian member of the Society for Research in Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus, and in the 1980's Bill and David Shurtleff from Washington State worked together to establish international myelomeningocele registry in Canada. This work contributed greatly to the academic contribution of the Society, which made important contributions to the infants and children affected by neural tube defects. Bill will be remembered for his regular attendance at the Society's annual meetings and his contributions to both the academic and social aspects of this Society.



Bill was appointed as the first head of the division of General Pediatrics at UBC, a role he filled for 10 years. He was devoted throughout his career to the care and treatment of children with neural tube defects, and worked tirelessly on their behalf. In this role he was

instrumental in fostering and nourishing the professional development of many students, residents, nurses and allied health colleagues from a variety of health disciplines. He also served as president of the Vancouver Medical Association and the BCCH medical staff. He was tirelessly devoted to teaching, and was a Clinical Professor of Pediatrics at UBC.

Following his retirement from active clinical practice Bill led efforts to establish a spina bifida clinic in Guatemala, making numerous volunteer trips to that Central American country with his devoted wife Myrtle. He also continued his role on the Boards of research and review committees of the Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus Association of BC and Canada and remained an active member over the years. Sir William Osler said that “The good physician treats the disease; the great physician treats the patient who has the disease”. Bill was a truly great physician, always committed to the patient and their family.

There have been so many of us who have benefitted from Bill’s care but it is the infants, children and adults with spina bifida to whom he was especially committed. He was a clinical pioneer and the father of spinal bifida care in Canada, and the memory of his many contributions will be cherished. There will be a celebration of Bill’s life in the end of September.

- Dr. Paul Thiessen
- Doug Cochrane, Chair & Provincial Patient Safety & Quality Officer
- Beverly Irwin, BSN, RN Nurse Clinician in the Spinal Cord Program

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