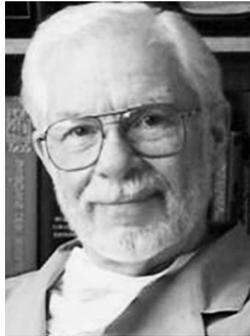


## In Memoriam

1921-2003 Jack Arthur Pritchard



Born in Ohio in 1921, Jack Pritchard began a career in medicine with a degree in Pharmacy before entering medical school at Case Western Reserve University in 1942. His class was designed to train physicians for the medical corps, but the war did not wait for his class. In 1946, he took an internship at University Hospitals of Cleveland and the following year was a fellow at Case Western during which the lure of things hematological became a strong attraction to the young physician-scientist. After a two year stint in the Army Medical Corps in Sendai, Japan, he returned to University Hospitals for an Obstetrics and Gynecology residency. He developed a close personal and professional bond with two other residents, Ted Quilligan and Fred Zuspan, and history now acknowledges their strong academic relationship as all three became undisputed giants in Obstetrics and Gynecology.

After residency, hematology again beckoned and Jack took a two year Olgebay Fellowship at Case Western. Under the tutelage of Oscar Ratnoff, a respected academic hematologist, he honed his skills in pregnancy related blood disorders. In 1954, he and his colleagues published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* their observations of intravascular hemolysis, thrombocytopenia, and other hematological abnormalities caused by eclampsia, the first description of what is widely referred to today as the HELLP syndrome. He also studied obstetrical hemorrhagic complications, especially the recently described and almost uniquely obstetrical condition known as disseminated intravascular coagulation, defibrination, or consumptive coagulopathy. Another mentor, Allan Barnes, introduced Jack to academic obstetrician-gynecologists who would be pivotal in bringing scientific underpinnings to a largely surgically oriented specialty. He became involved with a small group of physicians and scientists, including Leon Chesley, who had begun informal meeting which in 1953 became the Society for Gynecologic Investigation.

In 1955 only eight months after completing training, and at age 33, Jack was recruited to be Professor and Chairman of the fledging new University of Texas Medical School at Dallas. He also became Chief of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Parkland Memorial Hospital, the sparsely funded county hospital for indigent patients. He described his initiation as rather threadbare; the only paid faculty member soon departed to become a cruise line physician, the only porter also left; however, his secretary remained!

He worked tirelessly to provide care for indigent women and his mantra was to provide excellent clinical care from which all academic good would follow. He demanded the best care possible for Parkland patients, and his unwavering eye for detail ensured that it would be given. The residents held him in the highest esteem, his reputation for honesty was legend, and his straightforward approach became his trademark.

He recruited and retained faculty who were excellent clinicians, teachers, and researchers. These included, amongst others, Paul MacDonald, Peggy Whalley, and Norman Gant, indeed, academic excellence had followed.

Jack continued research studies which today would be called "translational", and this fits his decidedly pragmatic nature. He became a respected authority in preeclampsia and eclampsia, placental abruption, obstetrical hemorrhage, coagulopathies, and anemia. The regimen he developed to treat and prevent eclampsia with magnesium sulfate became a national standard. He made seminal observations on pregnancy-induced hypervolemia and iron and folic acid utilization. In 1969, he forged a maternal health and family planning system for indigent women of Dallas County that stands today as a model of excellence for its type. He stepped down as Chair in 1969 at 48 and devoted his still very active career to that which was closest to his heart and soul, "Parkland Obstetrics" and clinical investigation. He coauthored the 14th edition of *Williams Obstetrics* with Louis

Hellmann in 1971, after which he became its senior author. His pragmatic approach to the practice of obstetrics is now termed "evidence-based medicine". He remained clinically active, and was still regarded as one of the best and astute clinicians who was imbued with that "sixth sense" that often proved lifesaving for patients. His research continued and many more impeccable clinical observations followed until his retirement.

As retirement neared, he and his wife, Signe, migrated to live near their beloved Superstition Mountains near Phoenix. Theirs was a unique relationship with Signe acting as confidante and advisor. And for many residents and junior faculty, she also served as mother confessor and mediator! Signe worked tirelessly to help Jack with his responsibilities including the political squabbles inevitable in academic medicine. She was a true diplomat. After retirement they traveled widely and exuberantly.

Jack Pritchard accrued an impressive list of honors. He served on a number of committees for the National Institutes of Health, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the American Medical Association, and he was named consultant to the Surgeon General of the Air Force. He was an active member of the Society for Gynecological Investigation and served as its president. He was a member and officer of the American Gynecological Society and the American Association of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and later the American Gynecological and Obstetrical Society. He received the Distinguished Service Award of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the Distinguished Scientist Award of the Society for Gynecological Investigation, the Joseph Bolivar De Lee Humanitarian Award of the Chicago Lying-In Hospital, Fellow *ad Eundem* of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, and the Ashbel Smith Professorship of the University of Texas Systems.

He was honored by many ex-residents and colleagues when in 1975 they endowed the Jack A. Pritchard Professorship. The same group honored him and his wife in 1985 and endowed the Jack and Signe Pritchard Fellowship in Maternal-Fetal Medicine. The final honor was in December 2001 when knowledge of his failing health prompted a Parkland Resident Alumni dinner attended by hundreds who gathered from all over the country to pay respects and reminisce for the last time.

Submitted by Gary Cunningham, M.D.

Permission to reprint this obituary was granted by the author, F. Gary Cunningham, M.D. —19 September 2019