

HISTORY OF PEDIATRIC RHEUMATOLOGY REMEMBERING BARBARA (#2)

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Carol Black, CBE
Professor of Rheumatology
Vice President Royal College of Physicians of London

There is so much one can say about Barbara, and so many people to say it, for such was her influence. For me, there has been no one who has had such a dominant influence on my professional life. My medicine was, and is, influenced by the way she practiced. Her thoroughness, attention to detail, record keeping and knowledge of patients and their families was amazing. No one knew better how to care for chronic diseases and how to harvest clinical information in order to improve patient care.

Her passion for the children, their education and their families vibrated through her daily work. No child with arthritis could have had a better champion and as adults they all remember how much she did for them. Those of us privileged to see her in her own home, her great happiness with Angus, her love of entertaining, made visits to her home memorable. She is a “presence” that will remain with me.

Eric Bywaters, CME
Emeritus Professor of Rheumatology and Longtime Colleague

Barbara Ansell C.B.E., who died on September 14, 2001, was perhaps the leading figure in the world of Paediatric Rheumatology.

After qualification in Birmingham, and senior registrarship in Hammersmith, she came to Taplow in 1950, to join the Special Unit for Juvenile Rheumatism, set up in 1947, when Canada bequeathed the Red Cross Memorial Hospital there to research into Juvenile Rheumatism, which was taken over by the Medical Research Council. She loved children, and they loved her. The unit attracted patients from all over Great Britain, and from abroad, as well as many talented junior doctors, and Research Fellows, 349 in number up to its' closure in 1985.

She was large and generous-her laughter could be heard from one end of the corridors to the other. At first we dealt with rheumatic fever patients, but as that became scarce we took in, largely, children with chronic rheumatism. With an enthusiastic team of doctors, nurses, and physiotherapists, and a wonderful secretarial staff, we classified these children into 5 types which helped with subsequent research. They were carefully followed up in outpatients until they became adults. Let no one forget very often the disease process affects and cripples in adult life.

Barbara was in great demand as a teacher and speaker. Her enthusiasm enabled Pediatric Rheumatology to take off, both here and overseas, starting officially, perhaps, at the Park City meeting in Utah.

She collected, and was given, lots of teddy bears, and in some way they remind us of her happy, kind, and generous personality-and her worldwide fame.

Jo Woolnough

A Patient

I was only a baby when you came into my life,
My joints all swollen with pain,
My mother had been through so much strife,
She was at her wits end again.

With you, she got no nonsense,
You never filled her head with any dread.
Although your methods seemed hard and intense,
Only improvements were seen instead.

I would hear your booming voice,
And I would begin to cry.
The exercises you gave me no choice,
But to give them all a try.

We were pushed to the limits everyday,
It's only pain they said.
But now we know why we were made to pay,
So we could have a better life ahead.

You called us your special children,
The pride shone in your smile,
And even though we didn't know then,
You were with us through every mile.

I'm glad I knew you as my doctor,
A mentor and a really good friend.
A legend in my lifetime,
A fighter to the end.

In each country you rallied the cause,
To make people more aware,
Of how many children had Arthritis,
So they could give better care.

You will be missed badly,
By the old and the young.
You don't deserve to be in pain
After all you've done!

So rest now Barbara you've been the best,
And taken all of our strife.
The world for us is a better place,
Thank you for my quality of life.

Ulrich Steiger
Rheumatologist, Basel, Switzerland

Since I met Barbara in 1960 I was with her several times each year at her work at Taplow, Northwick Park, Windsor, and during meetings in England or elsewhere in the world, during her visits to Switzerland, often together with Angus, where they both stayed often in our house being close to my whole family, my wife, children, and grandchildren.

Her proverbial indefatigability will be illustrated by two typical happenings:

- 1) As president of the Heberden Society Barbara chaired the whole day at the annual meeting of the Royal College of Physicians, on the evening she made an excellent speech at the official dinner. Next morning again she had the chair of the meeting. After the meeting she cooked an excellent lunch at her flat. In the afternoon Angus and myself had to put the heater on in her lovely house at Stoge Poges while she did the ward round at Taplow. In the evening she cooked one of her

famous marvelous dinners for 12 guests. I myself stayed the night at her house. Next day she cooked a lunch for another 10 to 12 guests and another two guests stayed the night in her home.

- 2) Quite often she was helping me with my own patients in my consulting rooms at Basel. After her morning out-patients at Northwick Park and the flight to Basel she discussed from 2 to 5pm some 8 of my juvenile patients, together with my colleagues. At 5pm she gave a lecture at the Children's Hospital Basel, followed by seeing other patients up to 9:30pm before we had a late dinner. Early next morning she was back to England for the morning ward round.

So Barbara had always time to be a great help, directly with my own consulting work and by telephone any time mostly late night. She helped me with my own papers and book chapters together with her.