Claude Roy, the eminent Canadian physician and scientist, considered one of the founders of pediatric gastroenterology, died at the age of 86, in Montreal on July 2, 2015. He leaves behind a profound and lasting impression on the spirit of those who had the chance to share time with him, including countless colleagues, trainees and health professionals.

Professor Roy was born in Québec, obtained his MD degree at Laval University and completed his residency at McGill University’s Montreal Children’s Hospital. On completion of a fellowship at the Children’s Hospital, Harvard Medical School, Professor Roy practised some years in Quebec City before initiating an academic career at the University of Colorado, where he was appointed Professor of Pediatrics. In 1970, he returned to Canada to join Dr Claude Morin at Sainte-Justine Hospital, University of Montreal, which was at the time one of only four pediatric gastroenterology services worldwide. He went on to become a leader in pediatric gastroenterology and nutrition. Since 1987, the North American Society of Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition, has given annually an award in the name of Dr Harry Shwachman, to an individual for major lifelong scientific or educational contributions to the field of pediatric gastroenterology; Professor Claude Roy was the first recipient.

Claude was a consummate clinician, passionate and rigorous; he was beloved by the children and parents consulting him at our subspecialty division at Sainte-Justine Hospital, Montreal. His depth of knowledge and clinical acumen was reflected in his book, Pediatric Clinical Gastroenterology, co-authored with long-time friend and colleague Dr Arnold Silverman, which was first published in 1971. This authoritative work, lovingly known north of the 49th parallel as ‘Roy’s textbook’, has long served as a ‘bible’ to students and specialists alike.

Claude’s research had a great impact on clinical care, particularly in the field of nutrition for patients with chronic cholestasis and cystic fibrosis. Long after his ‘retirement’, as he continued to contribute to many aspects of nutrition research, he wryly observed:

‘It’s quite clear that the research virus has integrated into my genome, and it’s an addiction, and it’s not curable.’

His knowledge and leadership led him to assume prominent responsibilities as Co-President of the Pediatric section of the American College of Nutrition, President of the Canadian Association of Gastroenterology, President of the Nutrition Committee and later Nutrition consultant to the Canadian Paediatric Society.

Professor Roy was also an outstanding educator from the beginning of his career, when he was considered as the ‘Best Clinical Teacher’ at the University of Colorado. His continued dedication to excellence in teaching was recognized in our country in his receiving the first Educational Excellence award from the Canadian Association of Gastroenterology in 2003. All of his more than 60 trainees from around the world repeatedly expressed their attachment to Dr Roy as a mentor whose passion for medicine and science has had a significant impact on their academic careers. Claude was always available to advise and support young clinician-investigators. He was a true believer in nurturing clinicians with an interest in research; to address his perception that clinicians were becoming increasingly disengaged from scientific research, he was instrumental in initiating a national committee on the training of clinician scientists.

Claude’s commitment, generosity and high level of energy led him to assume locally, nationally and internationally duties at the highest levels of responsibility. At Sainte-Justine Hospital, he was Chief of Pediatrics, Chief of the Gastroenterology Division, Director of the Research Institute, and Director of the Department of Pediatrics at the University of Montreal; in other words, he occupied all the top posts in the institution.

Nationally, in addition to his involvement in the Canadian Association of Gastroenterology and the Canadian Paediatric Society, he was active with the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada and the Canadian Society of Clinical Investigation. He was also principal advisor to the President during the creation of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. Internationally, he was implicated in the activities of the North American Society for Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition, the American Academy of Paediatrics, and the American College of Nutrition.

Claude’s contribution to medicine and society were recognized with several distinctions as the title of ‘Officer of the Order of Canada’, the ‘National Order of Québec’, Doctor ‘Honoris Causa’ of the University of Geneva, and his induction in 2013 into the Canadian Medical Hall of Fame.

Claude’s many achievements could never have been accomplished without the unflagging love and support of his wife Simone St-Germain and of his daughters Sophie, Brigitte and Genevieve. They were always present in his conversations and a great source of pride for Claude.

Professor Claude Roy was a role model for many generations of trainees and colleagues, and has left behind him a “work well done”. We will miss his questioning mind, his knowledge and his intellectual excellence and rigour, but also his energy, his laugh, his determination and, particularly, his vision and generosity.

Fernando Alvarez MD, Christophe Faure MD, Steven R Martin MD; on behalf of the entire Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition Division, CHU Sainte-Justine, University of Montreal, Montreal, Quebec