

### Peter Macklem

Peter Macklem died on February 11, 2011. He was one of the true 'greats' of Canadian (or world) respiratory medicine, and will be sorely missed. I was a colleague of Peter's at the Royal Victoria Hospital and McGill University (Montreal, Quebec) from 1963 to 1975, when we were both young, and have been – more or less – in continuous contact with him since. This is a sad time.

His career was one of great distinction. He performed truly groundbreaking scientific work, starting with the study of forced expiration, and proceeding through the delineation of the pathophysiology of obstructive lung diseases, the early detection of COPD, and much of what we know about the respiratory muscles. He served the community in many ways, from being head of Medicine at the Royal Victoria Hospital to President of the Thousand Islands Area Residents Association. He was the first director of the Meakins-Christie Laboratories in Montreal, the most productive pulmonary research centre in the world for many years. He trained and collaborated with an enormous number of physicians and scientists who became leaders in respiratory medicine. His genius was widely recognized: he was an Officer of the Order of Canada, accumulated honorary degrees and won a Gairdner Foundation Wightman Award.

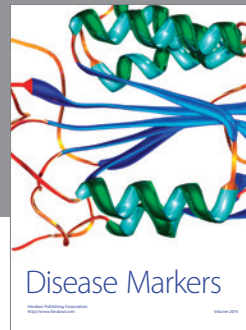
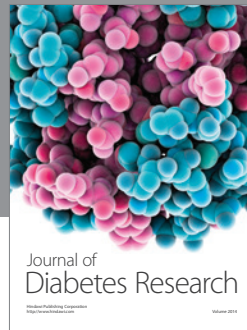
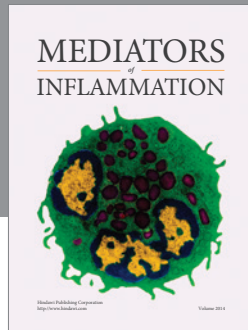


Obviously, Peter was a man of unusual qualities. He was very, very intelligent, and had a capacity for sustained and concentrated effort. He was gifted with remarkable enthusiasm; he attacked a problem, regardless of whether it was scientific, with real zeal. Typical of this was his defense of an intensive care nurse accused of overdosing children with digitalis, resulting in their deaths. The accusation was based on post-mortem levels of digitalis in the blood, which Peter pointed out were highly unreliable; he did so with some relish on the CBC – *The Peter Gzowski Morning Show* – and the accusation went away. I am sure that Peter knew next to nothing about blood digitalis levels before the issue arose, but he rapidly became an expert and was utterly unafraid of putting his reputation on the line in the controversy. He was a willing

and powerful advocate for things he believed in, and he very seldomly went off half-cocked. He was never a dilettante; what he did, he did with complete conviction.

I extend my condolences to his large and successful family. I will not see his like again.

Nick Anthonisen



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