

Professor Solomon (Sol) Posen was a beloved clinician, teacher and research scientist known to many generations of doctors and nurses for his inquiring mind, sharp wit, and commitment to others. He worked at Sydney Hospital, Royal North Shore Hospital and the University of Sydney for over 40 years as an endocrinologist, treating thousands of patients with complex bone and mineral diseases, and training a great many of Sydney's medical and health specialists.

Posen kept much of his early life to himself, suggesting that parts of it were both traumatic and formative. His parents, a school teacher and his wife, migrated from Germany to Britain just before the outbreak of the WWII with their seven children, presumably to escape the rise of the Nazis. In their adopted home, life was not easy. His father was interned during WWII. Posen studied Arts at the University of Manchester, majoring in history and English literature. Initially he taught in the UK but was attracted to medicine, applying and being accepted to medical schools in Adelaide and Melbourne. Around 1949, he set sail for Australia, ultimately deciding to stay in Adelaide because of its warm and dry climate. With little money he supported himself through medical school by working as a fruit picker, kitchen hand in an Italian restaurant (where he developed a lifelong distaste for spaghetti bolognese), baby sitter, department store employee (selling socks) and a tutor.

As a student he shone. His other great achievement during medical school was to meet Jean Simpson over a cadaver in the dissecting room, successfully convincing her to become his wife. Jean was a young physiotherapist and a perfect match for Posen's wit and inquiry. Jean's family were makers of the famous Simpson Washer and Posen thought that he was not regarded as "suitable" by the Adelaide establishment. Time proved his detractors wrong. Their partnership endured for 61 years, and together they raised four wonderful children, Jennifer, James (deceased), Mark and Timothy.

His love of literature and the use of language became a passionate hobby and his "black-felt pen" corrections (the older equivalent of "track changes") to the manuscripts of many young investigators became legendary. His reputation for excellence in the area of bone and mineral metabolism spread internationally, and such was his attraction that many of these colleagues visited him in Sydney, introducing us to the excitement of international collaboration and ideas.

Although he turned his back on religion, he retained a fascination for religious writing. *The Bible*, the *Torah* and the *Koran* he studied keenly, but his primary belief was in the explanations of science. He believed that the phenomenon of the world around us and human existence had scientific explanations and he sought to identify some of these in his own area of interest. He was a consummate academic, questioning, experimenting and publishing over three hundred original articles, commentaries and several books. He was awarded his MD in 1960 following postgraduate study at the University College in London where his interest in bone and mineral metabolism was kindled. His first book, entitled *Alkaline Phosphatase* with co-authors from Hartford, Connecticut, was a thorough treatise, meticulously written and referenced. Later books bring together his love of medicine and English literature, *The Doctor in Literature: Satisfaction or resentment?*, with four subsequent volumes and he was working on the sixth. The books are required reading for anyone interested in medical humanities.

Posen was also a model teacher. His lectures and tutorials were always superbly structured and delivered, illustrated and punctuated with wit, and examples from patients who were often participants in his teaching. The warmth and care that he demonstrated in a patient consultation extended to these teaching sessions and became the model consultation for many. In seminars, Posen would ask, "May I ask an ignorant question?" It was always something the audience all wanted to ask - the speaker may not have explained something properly or at all. But the rest just sat there, not wanting to appear ignorant, as they saw it.

His ability to relate to people and identify what mattered most to them through the question, "what would you do if this was your mother?" remains the single most important question for all of us in the practise of medicine.

Posen approached his recent diagnosis of renal cancer with the same scientific rigor that he used in managing his own patients. When he sustained serious injuries in an accident in May, he chose in his usual pragmatic way, not to have further treatment and died a day later.

He was loved dearly by his family and by many colleagues and patients. He was a mentor and role model to many; the archetype academic, questioning and attending lectures and journal club until the end.

Bruce Robinson and Rebecca Mason

Beloved husband of Jean Katie (nee Simpson), loving father of Jennifer, James (deceased), Mark and Timothy; cherished father-in-law of John, Jacinda and Kieran; adored grandfather of Thomas, Sarah, Michael, Amelia, Maxwell, Sophie and Mira. He had a brilliant mind and made an invaluable contribution to his patients, medical teaching and research. He lived for his family and led a full and active life until the end. He will be greatly missed by all.

Don Perry-Keene

