

PROFILE

Pediatric Grand Rounds: A Tribute to Norman J. Siegel, M.D.^a

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At ceremonies held in Baltimore Maryland on May, 4, 2002, Dr. Howard A Pearson, Professor of Pediatrics, was awarded the John A. Howland award of the American Pediatric Society, probably the most prestigious award of American Pediatrics. Dr. Pearson had been nominated for the award by Dr. Norman Siegel. The Department of Pediatrics Grand Rounds on Wednesday noon, October 26, 2002 was originally scheduled as a repetition of the presentation by Dr. Siegel and the acceptance by Dr. Pearson for those who could not be in Baltimore. However, in a number of meetings, unknown to Dr. Siegel, it was unanimously decided that it would be very appropriate to instead honor him as he stepped down from his position as Vice- and Interim Chairman of Pediatrics, and to formally thank him for his long and faithful service to the Department of Pediatrics, the Yale University School of Medicine, and the Yale New Haven Hospital.

Margaret K. Hostetter (Professor and Chair, Department of Pediatrics): Last May, this Department of Pediatrics celebrated a signal event when Howard A. Pearson was named the winner of the John A. Howland Award of the American Pediatric Society, arguably the most prestigious award in American Pediatrics which is given in recognition of "distinguished service to Pediatrics." At the presentation ceremony and the banquet in Howard's honor in Baltimore last May, Dr. Norman Siegel presented a masterful overview of Howard's life and work. Today we had planned to come together to hear Howard present again his acceptance address of the Howland Award to a New Haven audience, but Howard, in his generosity of spirit, has conspired with us to instead surprise Norm Siegel today.

Somehow we have been able to conceal all of this from him — no small feat.

Norman, this is where you have brought us today and we are with you as you begin your future accomplishments. Now we will hear from Howard about some of the giant steps that you have made along the way while we confidently await your future contributions to Pediatrics, Pediatric Nephrology, our Department, and the Yale University School of Medicine.

Howard A. Pearson (Professor and Chairman Emeritus of Pediatrics): Unknown to Dr. Siegel, several of us have secretly conspired to present a tribute to him in today recognition of his loyal service to the School of Medicine, the Department of Pediatrics, and the Yale-New Haven Hospital over the past three decades. We do this with

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Figure 1. Norman Siegel's third year pediatric clerkship group at UTMB.



some trepidation, because any one who knows Norman, realizes how he hates public demonstrations. Despite this, and undoubtedly against his wishes, we want to formally recognize his accomplishments as a pediatrician, a pediatric nephrologist, a teacher, and a leader. Our need to express these things transcends his reluctance to hear them!

Norman was born and grew up in Houston. After high school he went east to

New Orleans where he attended and academically excelled at Tulane University. He received an AB degree cum laude in chemistry and was elected to Phi Beta Kappa. The years in New Orleans, the Big Easy, undoubtedly expanded his appreciation of fine cuisine and wines — his life-long passions.

After college, he returned to Texas and entered medical school at the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston. At UTMB, Norman was mentored by Dr.

Figure 2. Photograph of Yale Pediatric Department, May 1969



William Daeschner who was chairman of pediatrics. Bill Daeschner is one of the great figures in American pediatrics and became Norman's mentor and friend — a relationship which still endures. Because of Bill Daeschner's example, Norman decided to become not only a pediatrician but also an academic pediatrician. Figure 1 shows Norman's third-year pediatric clerkship group at UTMB. This picture was sent to me by Dr. Jimmy Simon, now Professor and Chairman of Pediatrics Emeritus at Bowman Gray School of Medicine who was one of Norman's pediatric instructors at UTMB. Jimmy Simon had been a pediatric resident at Yale in the 1950s and he may well have influenced Norman's decision to come to New Haven for training. In 1968, Norman graduated from UTMB with both an M.D. and an M.A. degree in physiology.

During medical school, Norman met and courted Rise' Ross, and they were married during his senior year. All will agree that this was the most felicitous decision that Norman has ever made. In addition to being Norman's staunch supporter and strength, Rise' has her own successful

career. The Siegels have two children, Andrew and Karen, both of whom were born in New Haven.

In 1968, Norman came to New Haven as an intern in the Yale Pediatric Department that was headed by Dr. C.D. (Dav) Cook. The Departmental photograph in May 1969 (Figure 2) shows Norman, on the extreme right of the last row, wearing a white coat. This was probably the last time that he ever wore a white coat! His performance as a house officer was superior and he was accepted into a fellowship program in pediatric nephrology. There was no division of pediatric nephrology at Yale at the time, so he trained under Dr. John Hayslett in the Internal Medicine Nephrology Service. His research mentor became Dr. Mike Kashgarian who remains Norman's collaborator and friend today.

Mike remembers that as a fellow, Norm was studying renal blood flow by infusing microspheres into the renal artery of rats and then counting the microspheres in cut renal sections. He was having considerable problems with reproducibility of his results and asked Mike for guidance.

Mike's advice was classic: "Get more experience and use a sharper blade."

Norm's clinical skills and research have since been characterized by increasing experience and knowledge, and by ever more incisive technology.

Norm has lived and worked in New Haven for more than thirty years. Academic pediatricians are usually peripatetic — why has he stayed here so long? One reason may be his lifelong fascination with bulldogs. Where better than Yale to indulge this passion? Norman has had a number of his own bulldogs, including Moosie and Tuffy.

Some people have wondered why Norm decided to become a nephrologist. I don't have direct data on this question, but I do have a hypothesis. As I said previously, Norman was elected into Phi Beta Kappa at Tulane and this honor reflects broad scholarship. Although he majored in chemistry he undoubtedly studied classical literature. He could well have read the poetry of Omar Khayan, and Norm's passion for wine is well known: "What is man but an ingenious machine for turning the red wines of Shiraz into urine?" (Omar Khayam).

Norman has been able to combine study of his favorite organ and his love of fine wine into an integrated career, and as a result he could paraphrase Omar: What is the kidney but an ingenious instrument for turning the wines of France, Germany, Italy, Australia, Chile, California into urine.

Another of Norm's non-medical accomplishments is his prowess as a chef. True to his roots, he cooks on a large Texas-made, charcoal-fired cooker called Old Smokey. Generations of house officers have savored his barbecued ribs.

But enough of anecdotes and personal stories. I'd like now to talk about his accomplishments as a pediatric nephrologist and researcher, as an extraordinary teacher and as a loyal citizen and leader in the Department of Pediatrics.

His research contributions, both clinical and basic, have been substantial.

N.J. Siegel — Research Contributions Studies of:

1. Renal blood flow.
2. Acute renal failure.
3. Ischemic renal injury and reperfusion.
4. Nephrotic syndrome.
5. SLE nephropathy.

He has studied renal blood flow and ischemic renal injury using several techniques. Most innovative were his studies of renal ischemia using the new technique of nuclear magnetic resonance spectrometry. These studies showed alterations in intracellular ATP and ADP in the ischemic kidney. He then showed that pre-ischemic infusion of ATP and magnesium chloride were protective against renal ischemia, which had important implications for organ preservation in kidney transplantation. He also demonstrated that thyroxine was protective. Mike Kashgarian told me that the U.S. Army Medical Corps was aware of the protective effects of thyroxine and had considered infusions of thyroxine to combat soldiers during the Gulf War to protect against the ischemic renal injury produced by trauma and shock. Fortunately, it wasn't necessary and hopefully will not be necessary although one worries about the impending war clouds in the Mideast.

Being a pediatrician, Norman has naturally examined developmental aspects of renal function and showed that the fetal kidney is more resistant to ischemic injury than that of the adult. He has published a number of studies of the kidney in nephrosis, correlating electron microscopic findings with response to therapy and prognosis. Review of his extensive publications shows that he is an effective and a generous collaborator, especially with trainees and students, often giving them the first authorship of research papers.

His accomplishments have received national attention and he has received a number of honors.

N.J. Siegel — Honors and Awards

1. Phi Beta Kappa, Tulane University, 1964
2. Yale House Staff Teaching Award, 1978
3. Special Recognition and Service Award, Society for Pediatric Research, 1985
4. Mitchell L. Rubin Award for Distinguished Achievements in Pediatric Nephrology, 1992
5. Distinguished Service Award, American Pediatric Society, 1992
6. Founder's Award American Society of Pediatric Nephrology, 2002

Norm very early in his academic career at Yale received the Pediatric House Staff Teaching Award, attesting to his clinical skills, teaching ability, and accessibility to the residents. Traditionally this Award is given only once to a faculty member. I submit that if this were not the case, Norm would have retired the House Staff Teaching Award many years ago.

The Founder's Award, of the American Society of Pediatric Nephrology which Norm received this May in Baltimore, is especially meaningful. It has only infrequently been awarded for it recognizes not only clinical and research accomplishments in pediatric nephrology, but also other important contributions to this discipline as a whole. Norm has been an effective leader in national and international pediatric and nephrology organizations.

N.J. Siegel — National Leadership

1. Membership Chairman, Society for Pediatric Research, 1975-1985
2. Secretary/Treasurer, American Pediatric Society, 1993-1999
3. President, American Society of Pediatric Nephrology, 1998-1999
4. Council, International Pediatric Nephrology Association, 1992-1997
5. President-elect, American Society of Nephrology, 2002

His election to the presidency of the American Society of Nephrology is especially notable because the membership of this Society is mostly made up of internists and pathologists. I know of few instances in which a pediatrician has been chosen to head a national organization of predominantly internists.

But it is closer to home that Norman's selfless service has been most evident.

N.J. Siegel — Leadership at Yale
Yale University School of Medicine
Assistant professor of Pediatrics,
1972-1975

Assistant Professor of Pediatrics
and Medicine, 1975-1976

Associate Professor of Pediatrics
and Medicine, 1976-1982

Professor of Pediatrics and Medicine,
1982-

Department of Pediatrics

Vice Chairman, 1979-2000

Acting Chairman, 1/85-6/86, 1/95-
6/96

Interim Chairman, 2000-2002

Director of Pediatric Nephrology,
1972-

Director Pediatric Housestaff Pro-
gram, 1976-1996

Physician-in-Chief, Yale New Haven,
1996-2002, Children's Hospital

In addition to his long service as chief of pediatric nephrology, Norm has had many important leadership roles in the Department. For 20 years he headed the Pediatric Housestaff program. During this time he helped choose and supervise more than 300 residents. About half of these pursued further training in pediatric subspecialties, and half entered primary care pediatric practice — and a number of them are here with us this morning. For more than 20 years he was Vice-Chairman of Pediatrics; and during my chairmanship he was my indispensable and effective strong right arm. He continued as Vice Chairman with Joe Warshaw and for six years he was also Physician-in-Chief of the Yale New Haven Children's Hospital — enduring

countless hours of meetings with the Hospital and Medical School administrations. He served a total of three years as Acting Chairman and Interim Chairman of Pediatrics. Since the term of appointment of Chairman at Yale is three years, arguably Norm could be considered the seventh Chair of Pediatrics since the Department was founded in 1921.

Norman, over the years you have given me sound advice on many occasions, so I think that it is germane for me to end by giving you some advice, based on my own experiences after stepping down from the Chair fifteen years ago. If I had still been Chair, I would never have had time to become president of the American Academy of Pediatrics and be politically involved on the national scene for two years, including at least six visits to the Clinton White House. I was coordinator of the Department of Pediatrics educational initiative in Saudi Arabia and spent six months in that medically interesting and socially Byzantine country. The proceeds from this Departmental endeavor was used to finance the state-of-the-art Yale Children's Research Center on Congress Avenue. And for fourteen years, I have been able to spend extended periods of time in the summer as Medical Director and "Camp Doc" at Paul Newman's Hole-in-the Wall Gang Camp. I could not have done these things if I were still Chairman.

Norm, to quote the Bard, "We are here to praise you, not to bury you." For the first time in a very long while, you have been liberated from endless and often redundant School and Hospital meetings and conferences, to say nothing of the recurrent departmental crises which you have fielded so well. You can now take time to pick and choose what you want to do. I expect that

you will renew your research and there are always new and exciting things that you now will have the time to explore, exploit, and enjoy. Ten or fifteen years from now when you enter the Emeritus ranks, I'm sure that you will be able to cite an impressive list of the things that you have accomplished and enjoyed from here on. I hope that that distant event can be celebrated in a more festive fashion than this tribute today, but knowing you as we do, you will doubtless reject any such suggestion.

Alan H. Friedman, (Associate Professor of Pediatrics, Director, Pediatric House-staff Program): Anyone who has worked with Norman Siegel is aware of his remarkable and unparalleled loyalty, dedication, and commitment to our Department, Children's Hospital, School and Community. We also recognize that his dedication to Yale Pediatrics is matched by his wife, Rise'.

Dr. Pearson showed you a picture of the Yale pediatric house staff in 1969. Many of you have noticed the long lines of Departmental photos on the walls of LMP-4. If you look closely the next time that you pass by these photos, you will note one consistent face — always out front and always leading. That constant is Norm, present in at least thirty-one departmental photos.

In closing this morning's tribute I want to acknowledge Norm's tremendous efforts in pediatric education. You have been a teacher, mentor, and role model for hundreds of us. I know of no better way to demonstrate the impact that you have had on the Yale and New Haven pediatric community than by asking everyone present this morning who has learned from Norm's guidance and wisdom to stand and salute him. [Let it be noted that the entire audience in the Fitkin Amphitheater rose and applauded Dr. Norman Siegel.]