

## OBITUARY

Professor Barrie Vernon-Roberts, AO, MD, BSc, PhD, FRCPath, FRCPA, FAOrthA (Hon), FRS.SA

Barrie Vernon-Roberts, one of ISSLS most distinguished scientists, passed away on December 1, 2015 after a prolonged battle with Parkinson's disease.

Barrie was born in Ruthin, North Wales and studied medicine at Charing Cross Hospital and the University of London. After internships at Charing Cross Hospital he had a Lectureship at King's College, University of London. He received a PhD in 1965 and an MD in 1966 for research he carried out on hormonal regulation of macrophages. He completed his training in pathology and in 1974 he was appointed a Senior Lecturer and Consultant Pathologist at the Royal London Hospital Medical College. Originally he had considered a career in orthopaedic surgery and this was reflected by his lifelong involvement in the pathology of bone and joint disease particularly that of the spine. From the outset his opinion was highly regarded by many founding members of ISSLS including Alf Nachemson and Malcolm Jayson.

In 1976 Barrie moved to Adelaide where he took up the position of Professor of Pathology at the University of Adelaide as well as Head of the Division of Tissue Pathology at the Institute of Medical and Veterinary Science and Senior Visiting Pathologist at the Royal Adelaide Hospital; and he remained in these posts until 2005. During this period he supervised 45 students for higher degrees (largely within the discipline of bone and joint pathology), authored numerous scientific papers and book chapters, and won many awards including the Volvo Award on 2 occasions and the ISSLS Prize.

Barrie was one of the principle figures leading to the formation of the Adelaide Bone and Joint Research Foundation in 1982 and served for almost 20 years as Chairman of the Research Committee. His influence on orthopaedic research in Australia was enormous and was recognized in 1999 by his being made an Honorary Fellow of the Australian Orthopaedic Association.

The establishment of the Adelaide Centre for Spinal Research and the scientific research that followed would not have occurred without Barrie's pivotal influence. He was a collaborator in the true sense of the word – inclusive, freely giving of his time and incredibly supportive of all who worked with him. His enormous contribution to Spinal Disorders was acknowledged in 2005 when he was awarded the inaugural Alan Dwyer Medal by the Spine Society of Australia "For a lifetime of excellence in Spinal Research".

Barrie's contributions extended outside medicine and pathology and in 2002 this was acknowledged by the Premier's Award for Outstanding Community Achievement in South Australia. The following year the National Australia Day Council honoured him as Australian of the Year for South Australia and in 2005 he was made an Officer in the Order of Australia (AO).

Barrie was a man of enormous intellect, energy and varied interests. He was a keen athlete and as a young man had a golf handicap of 4; he maintained his interest in rugby and golf until the very end which he faced with his customary sheer determination and self-deprecating humour. When an account that described the importance of his research achievements was read to him several months ago, he simply whispered: "all lies!"

Barrie met his much loved wife Jane when they studied together in first year medicine, 61 years before his passing; he was extremely supportive and caring of their four children (one deceased in her mid20's as a result of road trauma) through both happy and difficult times.

He will be greatly missed by all who knew him.

Professor Robert D Fraser AM

December 2015