




In Memoriam: Robert W. Schrier

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1936-2021

On January 23, 2021, the scientific community lost a giant physician scientist, Dr. Robert W. Schrier who was a pioneer in internal medicine and nephrology.

Dr. Schrier was born in Indianapolis, Indiana, USA, on February 19, 1936. He graduated from Depauw University with bachelor's degree in 1957 and graduated with MD degree in 1962 from Indiana University School of Medicine. He completed his residency in internal medicine at the University of Washington in Seattle and spent a year at Harvard University and the former Peter Bent Brigham Hospital in Boston, MA, as a research fellow in endocrinology and metabolism. Between 1969 and 1972, Dr. Schrier worked at the University of California San Francisco as a faculty member.

Dr. Schrier arrived in Colorado in 1973 and worked at the University of Colorado School of Medicine until his retirement as Emeritus of Professor of Medicine in 2012. He served as a Chairman of the Department of Medicine at the University of Colorado School of Medicine for 26 years and Head of the Division of Renal Diseases and Hypertension for 20 years.

Dr. Schrier has served the nephrology community for decades as a physician scientist, an educator, and a leader. He is the only person ever to have been the President of the American Society of Nephrology (ASN), the International Society of Nephrology (ISN), and the National Kidney

Foundation (NKF). He also served as President of the Association of American Physicians and Vice President of the American Society of Clinical Investigation. He was also elected as a member of the National Academy of Medicine. Dr. Schrier is a Master of the American College of Physicians and an Honorary Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians. Throughout his entire academic life, he directed a very active research program and received continuous funding from the National Institute of Health for over 40 years. Dr. Schrier had numerous and significant contributions in different areas of nephrology, including acute kidney injury, autosomal dominant polycystic kidney disease, diabetic kidney disease, hypertension and regulation of fluid and electrolytes in cirrhosis, heart failure, nephrotic syndrome, and pregnancy. He authored over 1000 scientific manuscripts and edited numerous books in nephrology. His three volume textbook, "Diseases of the Kidney and Urinary Tract" has been a premier textbook of nephrology throughout the world. In 2005, he founded the *Journal Nature Reviews Nephrology* to become one of the highest-ranked journals in nephrology. He mentored hundreds of fellows who then pursued their career at leadership positions and cared for patients in the battle against kidney disease throughout the United States and in every continent.

Dr. Schrier received numerous awards, including the Robert H. Williams Distinguished Chair of Medicine Award, given by the Association of Professors of Medicine, as well as the most prestigious awards given by the nephrology societies: the Jean Hamburger Award from the ISN, the Peters Award from the ASN, and the David Hume Award from the NKF.



Dr. Schrier hosted many research fellows from all over the world. Among the Turkish nephrologists, Dr. Gültekin Süleymanlar, Dr. Tevfik Ecder, and Dr. Belda Dursun had the opportunity to work with him. Dr. Schrier never lost contact with his fellows and even continued to collaborate with some of them for many years.

Dr. Gültekin Süleymanlar was the first Turkish fellow who worked with Dr. Schrier. Below is Dr. Süleymanlar's feelings in memory of him:

I am deeply saddened by the loss of a great person, an outstanding scientist, an important teacher. I would like to briefly touch on the "Schrier factor" of my clinical experience that started in 1980. In the last years of my studentship and during the residency period, I have benefited greatly from Schrier's books. These books have always been my main reference sources in my Internal Medicine and Nephrology training. After completing my Internal Medicine residency period, I started to work at Akdeniz University, Department of Medicine, Division of Nephrology. Thereafter, I corresponded with Prof. Schrier. He stated that he could get support from ISN for financial resources. The letter of ISN Secretary Claude Amiel in April 1989 made my dream come true and I had the honor of being the first ISN Renal Fellow in our country. Between July 1989 and August 1991, I worked as a fellow for 2 years at the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center under the mentorship of R.W. Schrier and Laurence Chan. At that time, I had the pleasure of working in this center where there were fellows from more than 25 countries, and a very active training program was implemented. I must say that I benefited greatly from the intensive theoretical and practical training programs. Working in the field of experimental nephrology created a different excitement. In Schrier's orchestration, I had the opportunity to get to know and be inspired by very valuable scientists. I had the opportunity to listen to lectures from the most prominent scientists in the United States and all around the world (G. Gibeish, K. Thura, B.D. Rose, N. Kaplan, etc.). The Aspen nephrology courses, which are held for approximately 1 week each year in July, have a special place in my memory in terms of both scientific and socially satisfying activities. In conclusion, the 2 years of experience I spent with Prof. Schrier shaped my scientific mission and vision and had a significant impact on my academic life.

Among Schrier's important research topics, I can list cell injury in acute kidney failure, water and sodium metabolism, edema, polycystic kidney disease, and hypertension. He has shaped the world of nephrology with basic and clinical research in the above-mentioned areas, numerous congress presentations, hundreds of original and review articles, and dozens of books. After completing my fellowship period and returning back to Turkey, I was very happy to translate 3 of Schrier's books into Turkish and bring them to Turkish nephrology. University of Colorado Health Sciences Center is one of the world's leading centers in the fields of nephrology and hypertension, as in other fields. This center has led the way in spreading the science of

nephrology on a global scale, opening the doors to a large number of fellows from abroad and actively contributing to the training of these young people. Taking active roles in important organizations such as ASN, ISN, and NKF and sharing his knowledge on a wider scale is a reflection of his responsibility toward the world nephrology community. As a result, the basis of Schrier's philosophy of science is not to use science to make science but to use science as a tool to increase the benefit and welfare of humanity.

I must say that I was impressed by the exemplary and happy family structure that Schrier created with his wife Barbara and children, despite his high-level intense scientific activities. It provided an opportunity for old and new scientists and doctors who worked in the evening meetings titled "Colorado Union" at ASN and ISN meetings to come together and mingle. In fact, this situation is nothing more than a father taking care of his children.

I was very happy and excited to have the opportunity to work with Schrier, whom I have taken as an example as a scientist since my residency. This valuable person, with whom I had the opportunity to get to know closely during the 2-year training period, has been one of the main factors that guided my academic life. As a result of his death, the world nephrology lost a giant, versatile researcher, great mentor, and distinguished organizer. We will never forget him for his direct and indirect contributions to Turkish nephrology. I am deeply saddened by the loss of my father, and I bow respectfully and gratefully in front of this great man's memory. Bless his soul.

Dr. Tevfik Ecder worked as a research fellow with Dr. Schrier between 1998 and 2000 (Figure 1). Dr. Ecder's feelings about him are as follows:



Figure 1. Dr. Tevfik Ecder with Dr. Robert Schrier during his research fellowship at the University of Colorado School of Medicine.

I had the chance to work with Dr. Schrier for 2 years which had an enormous impact on my career. He was more than a mentor to me. I was amazed by his intellectual and scientific power and his leadership skills. He was able to conduct numerous basic and clinical studies with different fellows, all of which were eventually published in prestigious journals. Dr. Schrier has made Division of Nephrology of University of Colorado School of Medicine one of the most productive research centers in the world. One of his missions was to fight against kidney disease in the world. In order to reach his goal, he established the ISN Fellowship Program. Therefore, many fellows throughout the world had the chance to work with him. Dr. Schrier and his beloved wife Barbara accepted us as their family members. As in other countries in all over the world, Dr. Schrier had a great impact with his books and his lectures on the education and training of Turkish physicians. He will be missed by all of us and he will be in our prayers.

Dr. Belda Dursun worked as a research fellow at the University of Colorado Renal Division between 2004-2006 (Figure 2). Here are her thoughts about Dr. Schrier:

I had the privilege of knowing Dr. Schrier first time in Turkey at our national nephrology congress and then during my 2-year renal research fellowship at the Colorado University, Renal Division, Denver, between 2004 and 2006 under the mentorship of Dr. Edelstein who was a member of Dr. Schrier's team. Professor Schrier was a true mentor, teacher, and leader. He made a major impact on our understanding of Medicine and Nephrology, especially sodium and water homeostasis. I was deeply impressed by his endless enthusiasm for improving nephrology worldwide, as well as his sincere behavior to build strong human relationships and firm family bonds. I believe he touched many people's life, including mine. I cannot forget his valuable support during the time I worked as a research fellow in Denver. When I was presenting at the research conferences in the Division, I always remember him seated at the first row and providing important and positive contributions. When he



Figure 2. Dr. Belda Dursun with Dr. Robert Schrier during her research fellowship at the University of Colorado School of Medicine.

was planning a research project, he used to pay special attention to everybody's opinion in his team and making them feel valuable. He and his wonderful wife Barbara were always very kind to me and everyone working in the Division. I have been honored to be invited to their lovely house several times and they made me feel like family. I am also proud for taking part in the Turkish translation of some of the cornerstone books written by him including Renal and Electrolyte Disorders, Manual of Nephrology, and the Internal Medicine Casebook. I am so deeply saddened by the passing of Dr. Schrier. As a great scientist, clinician, mentor, and human being, Prof. Schrier has been a role model to hundreds of clinical/research fellows from all over the world. He truly created an incredible legacy in the University of Colorado School of Medicine and Renal Division, transforming it into one of the most important academic centers in United States. We are grateful for his enormous contributions to the field of Medicine and Nephrology. We have lost a legend and giant of nephrology. May he rest in peace.