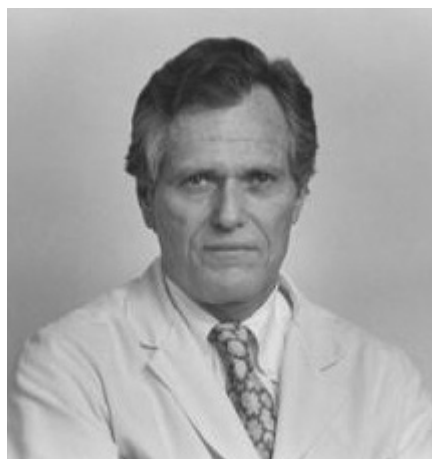

In Memoriam



Charles L. Christian, MD
1926-2019

Charles L. Christian, MD, a beloved mentor and revered icon in academic medicine died Sunday morning, August 11th in Fernandina Beach, Florida, surrounded by his family. An insightful and caring clinician, a dedicated and influential teacher of physicians throughout the world, a groundbreaking scientist, and a consummate gentleman, it is unlikely that academic medicine will see another like him.

Dr Christian was born and grew up in Wichita, Kansas. After a tour in the navy, he attended Case Western Reserve School of Medicine, graduating in 1953. He came to New York for training in internal medicine at Columbia Presbyterian Hospital where he developed his interest in the rheumatic diseases under the tutelage of Dr Charles Ragan, a founder of the Arthritis Foundation. At Columbia he initiated a scientific career marked by significant insights into the pathogenesis of rheumatoid arthritis and systemic lupus erythematosus. In one of his first publications, a single author study published in *Journal of Experimental Medicine* in 1958, he described aggregated gamma globulin as the serum target of rheumatoid factor. He went on to characterise immune complexes, anti-DNA antibodies and the essential contribution of complement to the immune system alterations in patients with SLE. With Paul Phillips, Dr Christian introduced the possibility that viruses might play a contributing role in connective tissue diseases, a concept that continues to be of great interest. With David Gocke, John Sergent, Michael Lockshin and others he led the discovery that hepatitis B (then called "Australia antigen") can drive polyarteritis nodosa, the first example of a chronic rheumatic disease caused by a virus, and with Robert Inman and others he characterised the microbial and host components of immune complexes in patients with infective endocarditis.

Dr Christian's impact in clinical medicine and as a leader in academic medicine was equally significant. In 1971, with Dorothy Estes, he published the definitive description of the natural history of SLE, a classic paper read by most medical students. Extending and applying the observations of Holman and Kunkel that lupus sera bound DNA and nuclear components, Dr Christian perfected the Farr assay with Graham Hughes and Selwyn Cohen and demonstrated the association of anti-DNA antibodies with disease activity in SLE. His work established what remains the most informative biomarker for the management of lupus patients. With Robert Kimberly, Michael Lockshin, Robert Inman and others he introduced high-dose pulse methylprednisolone therapy for patients with lupus nephritis.

In early 1970, Dr Christian was recruited to the Hospital for Special Surgery, along with colleagues Bombardieri, Cohen, Hughes, Kagen, Lightfoot, Lockshin, and Phillips, where he served as Physician-in-Chief and Director of Rheumatic Diseases, as well as Chief of the Division of Rheumatology at Weill Cornell Medical College from 1970 to 1995. In addition to his role in clinical medicine, he held the position of Associate Director of the Department of Research. Dr. Christian was called on twice to serve as Acting Physician-in-Chief at The New York Hospital and as Acting Chairman of the Department of Medicine at Cornell University Medical College. At HSS, Dr Christian developed the Combined Arthritis Program, a unique clinical and teaching collaboration among rheumatologists, orthopaedic surgeons and social workers, providing comprehensive management of the most complex patients with arthritis. Under Dr Christian's leadership, in 1978 HSS received its first Multipurpose Arthritis Center grant from the National Institutes of Health and 10 years later in 1988, received its second grant. After retirement from his academic position at HSS and Cornell in 1995, Dr Christian continued to care for patients with rheumatic disease as a Professor of Medicine at the University of Florida College of Medicine in Jacksonville, Florida.

Dr Christian served as Editor-in-Chief, *Arthritis & Rheumatism*, 1971-75, President of the American College of Rheumatology in 1976-77 and received the Presidential Gold Medal of that organization in 1996, in recognition of outstanding achievements in rheumatology over an entire career. He was an emeritus member of the American Society for Clinical Investigation.

Dr Christian was known for his remarkable memory, particularly when it came to his patients, as well as his elegance, kindness and grace. He was, first and foremost, a doctor. The words that he expressed in describing his mentor, Charlie Ragan, equally apply to Charles Christian: "His life confirmed the thesis that the skills of a great teacher and physician are inextricably bound with human qualities."

Dr Christian was preceded in death by his wife of 47 years, Diane Collings Christian. He is survived by Molly Rinehart, his partner, constant companion and soulmate of 15 years and his children, Victoria, Jennifer and Matthew, grandchildren Maximilian, Daphne, Luke, and Maria, great-grandchildren Wilder, Bowie, and Arlo, and so many patients and physicians whose lives he enriched.

A Memorial is planned for the Fall of 2019 in Fernandina Beach, Florida.

To know and work with him was, for many of us, including the editor of this journal, not only the best opportunity but a lifelong legacy, May this new trip be an easy one, Chuck. (S.B.)