Molecular Neurobiology

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An Appreciation

Leonhard Scott Wolfe, MD, PhD, FRCP (C), ScD, FRSC (1926–2001)

Dr. Leonhard Scott Wolfe, Killam Professor, Department of Neurology and Neurosurgery, McGill University, died December 3, 2001 after a lengthy illness. His death ended the illustrious career of an outstanding neurochemist and medical scientist who served the Montreal Neurological Institute (MNI) and Hospital (MNH) and McGill University with great distinction for four decades.

Wolfe was born on March 25, 1926 in Aukland, New Zealand. He obtained his BSc and MSc degrees in 1947 and 1949, respectively, from Canterbury University College, University of New Zealand in Christchurch, where he was a University of New Zealand Scholar and subsequently a Royal Society of New Zealand Scholar. He went to England as an 1851 Exhibition Scholar and studied insect physiology in Cambridge under Sir Vincent Wigglesworth, obtaining his PhD in 1952.

After a stint as associate entomologist in the Science Service Laboratory in London, Ontario, during which time he studied the biology of blackflies, Wolfe entered medicine at the University of Western Ontario, graduating with an MD with Honors in 1958. He interned at the Royal Victoria Hospital in Montreal. Then, as a medical research fellow of the National Research Council of Canada, he trained for 18 mo under the eminent neurochemist Professor Henry McIlwain at the Maudsley Hospital in London, England.

In 1960, Wolfe returned to Montreal as an assistant professor in the Department of Neurology and Neurosurgery at McGill University and associate neurochemist at the MNH. From 1965 to 1990, he was the director of the Donner Laboratory of Experimental Neurochemistry at the MNI and a neurochemist at the MNH. He was promoted to professor in the Department of Neurology and Neurosurgery in 1970, becoming a Killam Professor at the MNI in 1992 and Emeritus Professor in 1995. During this time, Wolfe was a Medical Research Council of Canada Career Investigator.

Wolfe had a joint appointment in the Department of Biochemistry. At different times, he was an associate member of the McGill Centre for Studies on Aging and the McGill Nutrition and Food Science Centre, as well as a consultant on metabolic neurological diseases at both the Montreal Children's Hospital and the MNH.

Throughout his career, Wolfe served on various university, departmental, and MNI committees and boards. He regularly taught biochemistry to medical students and in the Faculty of Science, also occasionally lecturing on a variety of subjects in many departments. From 1970 to 1980, he chaired the Research Seminars at the MNI/MNH. He supervised an impressive number of graduate students and postdoctoral fellows.

Wolfe had several major research interests and made significant contributions in numerous fields, which he published in 218 papers, not including abstracts. His scientific achievements were recognized and respected worldwide. He was elected Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada and of the Royal Society of Canada. He was a visiting professor at universities in Bologna, Strasbourg, Rehovot, San Diego, and Helsinki, among others. As an invited lecturer and speaker at international meetings, too numerous to list, he discussed brain ganglosides and gangliosidoses, various aspects of the prostaglandin system in physiology and pathophysiology; glycoprotein and glycolipid storage disorders; biochemical studies of ceroid lipofuscinoses; or Batten's disease; age pigments in relation to Alzheimer's disease; dolichols and their relationship to lysosomal membrane turnover—to name a few of his pre-occupations. Complicated subject matter, difficult and outstanding biochemistry, always presented with aplomb.

Wolfe was the deputy chief editor of the *Journal of Neurochemistry*, the premier journal in the field (1973–1979) and chairman of the Publications Committee of the International Society for Neurochemistry (1979–1983). He served on the editorial boards of the *Journal of Neurochemistry* (1969–1973), *Prostaglandins* (1972–1980), *Canadian Journal of Neurological Sciences* (1973–1981), *Neurochemical Pathology* (1982–1993), and *Archives of Gerontology and Geriatrics* (1989–1995). He was a sought-after referee for papers submitted to more than 30 national and international journals in biochemistry, neurochemistry, neuroscience, lipid research, neurology, neuropathology, clinical investigation, and pediatrics.

In 1994, Wolfe was honored by the Leon S. Wolfe Symposium "Lipids in the Nervous System: from Structure to Signal Transduction" at the Louisiana State University Neuroscience Center in New Orleans. In 1995, he summarized his life's work in a remarkable Hughlings Jackson Lecture at the MNI, entitled "First Principles to Second Messengers: The Story of Lipids in the Nervous System."

Wolfe's enthusiasm for science in general, his global view of the subject, his deep knowledge and understanding of the brain and its workings, and his willingness to share his ideas made him an exciting colleague. He read widely, loved music and art, played the piano, was a potter, collected stamps, and played bridge—all with boundless energy. Life in his orbit was never dull and was a privilege.

He is survived by his wife, Jeanne, professor in the School of Urban Planning at McGill University; his daughter Dr. Elizabeth Wolfe Edwards, associate professor of Chemical Engineering at the University of Toronto; his son, Dr. Alexander Wolfe, associate professor of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences at the University of Alberta in Edmonton; and his three grandchildren.

Hanna M. Pappius