

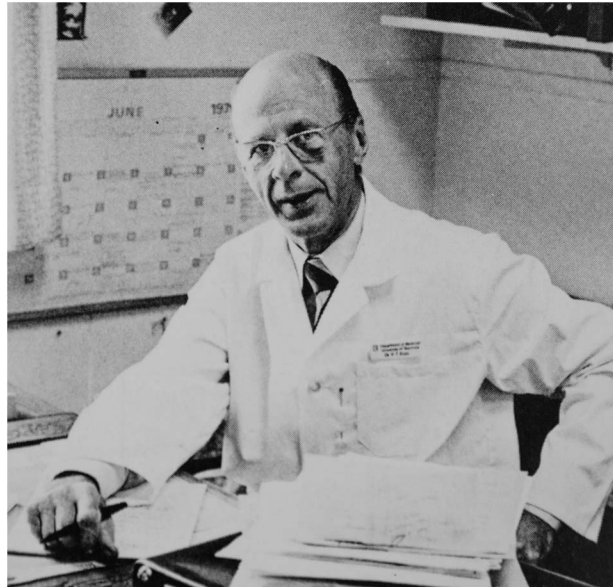
# R. T. Ross, CM, MD, FRCP, DSc (Hon) (1924–2017), Founder, *Canadian Journal of Neurological Sciences*

Dr. Robert Thomas Ross died at the age of 92 on April 15, 2017. He founded the *Canadian Journal of Neurological Sciences* in 1974 and supported it with his own finances for seven years while serving as editor-in-chief, publisher, and distributor until it was sold to the Canadian Neurological Society for one dollar in 1981. He also served as president of the Canadian Neurological Society.

Dr. Ross was born and raised in Winnipeg, received his MD degree from the University of Manitoba in 1948, and trained in neurology under the likes of Macdonald Critchley and other distinguished masters of the profession at Queen Square, London. When he returned to Manitoba in 1953, he was the province's first and only neurologist serving a population of over 800,000. He established the Section of Neurology and its training program at the University of Manitoba.

Dr. Ross was an extraordinarily gifted clinician of the classical vintage. A strict disciplinarian, he had no time for fanfare and no patience for nonsense, whether you were a student, resident, department head, or dean. Although he dominated neurology locally for many decades, his reputation permeated well beyond the borders of Manitoba. His strength of character and piercing intellect served for many years as neurology's answer to an equally potent and persuasive head of neurosurgery, Dr. Dwight Parkinson. Combined neurology/neurosurgery rounds at the University of Manitoba during that era were a sight to behold, but not for the timid.

Beneath Dr. Ross's serious demeanour and towering stature (both physically and in reputation) was a beloved, highly respected teacher with a razor-sharp wit. He had an engaging sense of humour and was a raconteur second to none. He critically influenced the career path of numerous medical students, some of whom went on to have illustrious careers of their own in clinical neuroscience, throughout Canada and the United States.



Any trainee who reviewed a patient at the bedside with Dr. Ross was provided with an unforgettable learning encounter and reminder that medicine is both art and science. In 1978, he published his famous “little black book” on *How to Examine the Nervous System*. Originally it was a pocket-sized survival tool for students doing a tour of duty on the neurology service at the Winnipeg General Hospital. Subsequent editions expanded in size, content, and distribution, offering students throughout North America a taste of some of Dr. Ross's bedside teaching pearls, such as the Groucho Marx manoeuvre. In the foreword to the 4th edition, Lewis P. Rowland, MD, wrote,

Robert T. Ross is one of the most respected neurologists in North America ... [He] knows how to examine patients, and he knows how to teach medical students ... they are the ones most likely to be perplexed by the apparent complexity of the neurological examination ... Dr. Ross has come to their rescue.

He produced dozens of papers on a broad range of subjects, including multiple sclerosis, parkinsonism, syncope, and vascular disease of the brain, retina, and spinal cord. He coined the phrase “transient tumour attack” in his paper on episodic non-epileptic symptoms in patients with intracranial lesions. In the pre-CT scan era, he highlighted that the corneal reflex is depressed in patients with contralateral deep parietal lesions and then explored the patho-anatomical basis of this curious observation in a series of animal experiments.

Dr. Ross's contributions were not limited to clinical and academic activities. He was a magnanimous supporter of the University of Manitoba and the community-at-large. He established a trust fund for the medical library as well as the

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university's first computer-equipped learning centre. He established a generous endowment in support of postgraduate scholarships for neurology residents undertaking additional training out-of-province, as well as a bursary fund for the Faculty of Law. The arts communities both locally and nationally also greatly benefited from his philanthropic endeavours. He served as a long-time member of the University of Manitoba Senate, as well as on the boards of the Muscular Dystrophy Association of Canada, the National Gallery of Canada, the Winnipeg Art Gallery, the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, the Manitoba Chamber Orchestra, and the Winnipeg Library Foundation. He received numerous honours, including being the first recipient of the Drewry Research Award in Physiology and the first recipient of the Manitoba Medical Association Scholastic Award, and he was a member of the Order of Canada.

One true measure of a physician's worth can be found in the testimony of his/her patients. Those of us who inherited Dr. Ross's patients know the enormous respect they held for him. This is perhaps his greatest legacy.

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