

***ATS PEDIATRIC ASSEMBLY's
FOUNDER AWARDEE 2011***

Robert Mellins MD
Professor Emeritus of Pediatrics and Special Lecturer
Columbia University – Pediatric Pulmonary Division

This is a life's most wonderful days as I have to privilege of taking the next 10 minutes to honor Dr. Robert Mellins as the ATS' Pediatric Assembly's Founder Award for 2011.

I will begin with the required photos from Dr. Mellin's youth, ranging from his toddler years, through school and early University. The bottom –most photo shows with his proud parents.

Bob obtained his MD from Johns Hopkins University and then underwent extensive training in pediatrics, cardiology and cardio-respiratory medicine at Columbia University. He remained at Columbia University where he subsequently became the inaugural Director of the Pediatric Pulmonary Division and then his outstanding career was recognized in 2010 by his appointment as Professor emeritus of Pediatrics and Special Lecturer at Columbia University.

This slide provides a succinct overview of Dr. Mellin's personal academic contributions. I've reviewed his CV and selected 4 of his publications which together led to paradigm shifts in how we currently treat infants and children. The first (Med Thorac, 1967) and third (Circ Res, 1969) were seminal contributions to our understanding of pulmonary edema and resulted in the field of pediatric pulmonary medicine switching their previous approach in managing children suffering from status asthmaticus. In brief, his work, and the work of others, led physicians to switch from "overhydrating" children (in the hope of liquefying their airway secretions) to appropriately using normal or slightly lower levels of hydration to avoid interstitial pulmonary edema. The second article (Pediatrics 1968) that I list reveals a pulmonary mechanics approach to determine the earliest site of airway obstruction in cystic fibrosis patients. The fourth article that I have chosen arises from his careful observations as a clinician; he recognized the failure of the automatic nervous system in Ondine's curse. Many investigators have built upon these observations to provide optimal care for children suffering from this disorder.

As the Director of Pediatric Pulmonology the work by Dr. Mellins, his trainees and collaborators have led to 99 peer reviewed manuscripts, 70 review – editorials – book chapters and 1 textbook. This work has largely focused on four areas: pulmonary edema, control of ventilation during infancy and childhood, lung mechanics in health and disease and community-based approaches for asthma control.

Dr. Mellins was far ahead of his time as he very early on recognized the importance of multi-disciplinary training. His many trainees have come from the disciplines of Allergy, Anesthesiology, Cardiology, Engineering, Health Education, Internal Medicine, Neonatology, Nutrition, Psychology and of course Pediatric Pulmonology. He has trained 36 pediatric pulmonologists.

Dr. Mellins was one of a small group of individuals who were responsible for the establishment of Pediatric Pulmonology. In 1972 he and 5 collaborators published their committee's report on the Respiratory Care in Infants and Children (ARRD, 1972). This was, at least in part, responsible for Dr. Ed Kendig's 1973 two sentence request to the American Board of Pediatrics to establish a sub-board for certification in pulmonary disease in children. The next step was for the ATS to establish an Advisory Committee on Pediatric Pulmonary Programs; this group published their report in 1976 (ARRD). Bob then chaired the Task Force which established the guidelines for Pediatric Pulmonary training (Pediatrics 1978). This led to the committee, chaired by Dr. Lynn Taussig, which applied for certification of the sub-specialty in 1980. Bob was one of the members of the first ABP Subspecialty committee for Pediatric Pulmonology which was chaired by Dr. John Brooks. They did not grandfather themselves into the specialty; rather they took the exam to earn their certificate. Dr. Mellins holds Certificate # 4.

Bob has also helped record the history of Pediatric Pulmonology. He, Dr. B. Stripp and Dr. L. Taussig, outlined the chronology of the birth of our sub-specialty (ARRD 1986) and later (Pediatric Research) co-authored a historical perspective of the origins of Pediatric Pulmonology in North America with Dr. Chernick.

The respect with which Dr. Mellins is held by his colleagues is reflected in the major leadership positions he has held in the ATS and the ALA. This slide lists some of his leadership positions but I draw special attention to his Presidency of the ATS (the only pediatrician to have held this position), Presidency of the Fleischner Society and Vice-Presidency of the ALA. His achievements have been recognized by many different organizations including the ALA (Will Ross medal), the ATS (Distinguished Achievement Award), the AAP-ACCP (E. L. Kendig Award) and Columbia University (P&S Distinguished Alumnus Award). Bob is also active in the private foundations devoted to the betterment of our society. He has been the President of the L.A. Jones Foundation, an organization dedicated to responsible leadership in adolescent boys and girls and he has chaired the Strategic Planning Committee for the Arnold F. Gold Foundation which is dedicated to humanism in medicine.

This final slide is dedicated to the most important people in his life. In this photo you see Sue his wife, his son David and his daughter Claude with her husband Michael with their three children.

In closing I would ask that you join me in honoring Dr. Robert B. Mellins the ATS' Pediatric Assembly's Founder Award for 2011. Thank you.