

Obituary: Emeritus Professor Adrian Lee AC BSc PhD FASM (1941–2023)

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Adrian Lee was an academic at the University of New South Wales for 38 years, progressing from a lecturer teaching medical and science students to become Professor of Medical Microbiology and Head of the School of Microbiology and Immunology for 9 years.

His progression through the academic ranks was a reflection, not only of his outstanding commitment to learning and teaching, but also his stellar research in the field of gut microbiology. During his career, Adrian built a large research team working in different aspects of this broad field, most notably the gut bacterium *Helicobacter pylori*.

Adrian's early research was focussed on curved and spiral-shaped members of the 'normal microflora', now referred to as the 'microbiota'. This was a poorly understood area of microbiology, but 40 years later, has become a particularly hot area of the discipline and recognised for its importance in all aspects of physical and mental wellbeing. Adrian's work on the largely uncharacterised gut bacteria was to draw the interest of future Nobel Laureate, Prof. Barry Marshall, who sought Adrian's guidance regarding curved bacilli that he and Prof. Robin Warren had observed in gastric biopsies of patients with gastritis and peptic ulcers. Many years later, Prof. Marshall invited Adrian to accompany him to the Nobel award ceremony in Sweden in 2005 and included him as an author in his book *Helicobacter Pioneers: Firsthand Accounts from the Scientists who Discovered Helicobacters 1892–1982*.

Adrian's persistence and success in the challenging area of gut microbiology was recognised by the awarding of nationally competitive research grants from the National Health and Medical Research Council for over 30 years (1972–2003) – a truly remarkable record. He published over 250 research

articles and had a significant impact on the *H. pylori* field. His major contributions include an understanding of how gastric acid contributes to pathology, the development of small animal models to study *H. pylori* disease and pioneering preclinical studies proving the feasibility of *H. pylori* vaccines. Adrian was regularly invited to speak at international conferences in the field and, in 1991, chaired the '6th International Workshop on *Campylobacter* Infections' in Sydney. At that meeting, the name of the conference was changed to 'International Workshop on *Campylobacter*, *Helicobacter* and Related Organisms'. Following his retirement, Adrian was made an Honorary Member of the European *Helicobacter* and Microbiota Study Group.

In addition to being an exceptional researcher, Adrian was also an outstanding educator, inspiring and teaching thousands of future doctors and microbiologists. This was recognised by numerous awards, including the Vice-Chancellor's Award for Teaching Excellence at the University of New South Wales and the inaugural Distinguished Teaching Award of the Australian Society for Microbiology. During this time, he acted as a consultant for the World Health Organization in Medical Education, running workshops around the world in learning and teaching for health professionals. He extended this passion for education to support his colleagues to develop their teaching practice in his role as Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Quality Improvement) at UNSW. In 2008, he was awarded a Career Achievement Award by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council for outstanding contribution to learning and teaching recognised across the higher education sector.

Adrian was an inspirational and passionate leader in microbiology research and education who left an indelible influence on those who had the privilege to work with him.