

Tribute

Professional tribute: Dr. Mary D. Jones

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On November 21, 2020, the field of Pediatrics lost one of its most dedicated physicians, Dr. Mary D. Jones. Fondly known by her patients and colleagues as “Dr. Mary,” Mary was a compassionate human being and a fierce advocate for children and their families. Mary began her professional career by earning a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from the University of Nebraska in 1971, where she graduated with highest honors. She then went on to receive a Master of Public Health in Maternal Child Health from Tulane University School of Public Health in 1974. Shortly thereafter, eager to gain autonomy and play a greater role in the planning of care for her patients, Mary pursued a Doctor of Medicine from the LSU School of Medicine in New Orleans, Louisiana. In 1981, she completed her residency training in pediatrics at the University of Texas in Galveston. In 1982, she joined East Bay Pediatrics as the first female partner in the practice, where she continued to work until she retired in 2014. During this time, Mary also served on several committees as part of the Department of Pediatrics at Alta Bates Hospital in Berkeley, California, where she developed and implemented protocols for neonatal hyperbilirubinemia, pain control in neonatal procedures, and guidelines on breastfeeding.

While Mary possessed numerous qualities that made her an outstanding pediatrician, her greatest asset was her ability to touch the lives of each and every patient and family that walked through her door. Whether it was a healthy child presenting with an acute illness or a child with a complex medical condition, she had an innate ability to connect with them, comfort them, and allay the fears of concerned parents. When one of Mary's patients from her practice was diagnosed with a rare neurodevelopmental disorder known as Rett syndrome,

she took it upon herself to become more knowledgeable about the pathophysiology, diagnosis, management, and treatment of this rare disorder. In an effort to provide comprehensive care in a multidisciplinary clinic setting and improve the quality of life for those diagnosed with Rett syndrome, in 2004, Mary helped found Katie's Clinic for Rett Syndrome and Related Disorders, the only clinic of its kind on the West Coast. Her hands-on expertise and human touch led to her becoming Medical Director of Katie's Clinic from 2008 until her passing, where she served over 200 patients from all over the West Coast, Hawaii, Alaska, the United Kingdom, and the Philippines.

As Mary encountered more patients in the clinic, her quest to understand the mechanistic underpinnings of Rett syndrome and related disorders grew, leading her to become involved in several research projects. Mary became a Principal Investigator (PI) for several studies, including pharmaceutical trials in Rett syndrome and hippotherapy (equine therapy) for individuals with Rett syndrome and related disorders; and she worked with PI Dr. Elaine Pico on the effect of Low Magnitude Mechanical Stimulation on bone mineral density in Rett syndrome and the NIH National History Study for Rett Syndrome and related disorders. Mary presented the findings at national and international conferences and in scientific journals.

While her interest and engagement in research continued, she remained passionate about caring for the individuals in her clinic and being their biggest advocate. Mary went above and beyond the role of a pediatrician, and was often found driving hundreds of miles to attend Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings at her patients' schools, and delivering therapeutic equipment

to their homes. When any patient from the clinic was admitted to their local hospital, Mary made it her duty to call the hospital to check in on them and to speak directly with the physicians caring for the patient so that she could educate them about Rett syndrome and answer any of their questions to enable them to provide appropriate care for the patients. Mary's commitment to her patients, through her actions, is a testament to how selflessly and deeply she cared them and their families.

Mary's impact on the lives of her patients was so great that it inspired many of them to go on to pursue a career in medicine. She has indeed left an indelible mark on every life she touched with her empathy and compassion. Dr. Mary's profound legacy will live on forever and her contributions to the world of medicine, specifically in the field of Rett syndrome and related disorders, will resonate for decades to come.