



Autonomic Neuroscience Basic and Clinical: Obituary for Geoff Burnstock Vale-Professor Geoffrey Burnstock

John B Furness



Geoff at his art. He was very talented and gained much satisfaction from his wood carving.

Autonomic Neuroscience has lost an outstanding, great and much-loved colleague with the death of Geoff Burnstock in Melbourne on 3 June 2020 at the age of 91.

Geoff was dedicated to his family, his science and his art. He was born in London in 1929, survived the second world war blitz of London, graduated with a BSc in Zoology from King's College London in 1953 and completed a PhD, also in Zoology, at University College London, in 1957.

"I had the wrong background, the wrong accent, the wrong clothes, but I got into biology at King's College which was the closest thing to medicine. And then I did my PhD at University College London," he said. "I later worked at Oxford and then went to America on a Rockefeller scholarship."

He was the Editor of *Autonomic Neuroscience Basic and Clinical* from 1985 to 2017 when he was succeeded by the current editor, Roy Freeman. He was also Foundation President (1995) of the affiliated society, the International Society for Autonomic Neuroscience, which provides the Geoff Burnstock awards to emerging scientists at its regular international meetings. Geoff obtained much pleasure in seeing

young people expand their talents.

Geoff has published over 1500 papers, almost all related to Autonomic Neuroscience, has around 250,000 citations and the stellar h-index of 156. He is famous for his development of the whole field of purinergic science. He pioneered purinergic pharmacology, to the extent that from 1994 to 2004 he was number one in the Institute of Scientific Information list of most cited scientists in Pharmacology and Toxicology. Much of our understanding of purinergic signalling and the classification of purinergic receptors derives from Geoff's work. Geoff is still the world's most cited pharmacologist. The first clinically advanced purine receptor antagonist, currently in phase III for the treatment of cough, is named after him: GEFAPIXANT.

Geoff was appointed to a Senior Lectureship in Zoology at Melbourne University in 1959, became reader in 1962 and Professor and Chairman of Zoology in 1964. He left Melbourne to become Head of the Department of Anatomy and Developmental Biology at UCL in 1975, which he held until retirement from this position, certainly not from science, in 1996. He built Anatomy and Developmental Biology at UCL into one of the largest and most successful departments in Britain. From 1997 to 2015, Geoff was Director of the Autonomic Neuroscience Institute at the Royal Free Hospital in London, from which he returned to the Department of Pharmacology and Therapeutics at Melbourne University. Geoff was very active in the department in Melbourne in these last 5 years, giving lectures and, in particular, mentoring and inspiring students.

Fittingly Geoff has numerous honours and awards. Amongst these, Geoff was elected to the Australian Academy of Science in 1971 and was awarded the Academy's Burnet Medal and Lecture in 2018. He was made a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1986 and was awarded the Royal Society Gold Medal in 2000. He was awarded Honorary Fellowship of the British Pharmacological Society in 2004 and was the BPS Gaddum Awardee in 2010. Geoff gave the first Von Euler lecture at the Karolinska Institute in 1985. Also in 2018, Geoff was made a companion of the order of Australia (AC). These are only a sampling of his distinctions.

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The journal plans a memorial volume in Geoff's honour.