IN MEMORIAM: DONALD F. KLEIN M.D., D.Sc.

REMEMBRANCES BY DANIEL S. PINE

Don Klein had a powerful influence on virtually all corners of psychiatry during the past 50 years, and his influence accrued both through his published work and other public activities as well as his day-to-day interactions with students, mentees, and patients. I feel extremely fortunate to have been one of the countless people who had the opportunity to interact with Don and be shaped by his larger-than-life presence. I already miss greatly so many things about his unusual personality. One such thing that I will greatly miss was the combination of Don’s talents, which always amazed me: beyond his skill at clinical trial design, data analysis, and patient care, one could always find another talent of Don’s that seemed to emerge out of nowhere. He loved art and music, to the point of being a cellist! Who would have known! The other thing that I will greatly miss was Don’s sense of humor, applied in ways that eased the pain from so many situations, including many situations in my own life. While I enjoy stories in almost any setting, Don’s stories about the discovery of psychopharmacology or unusual experiences in life are my favorites. He was a great person, and, like all great people, his memory will inspire long beyond his time on our planet.

REMEMBRANCES BY MURRAY B. STEIN

Don was a pioneer in the field of anxiety disorders, having made seminal contributions to diagnosis and treatment over a period of clinical research that spanned more than a half century. Don’s early work brought to our awareness that there was more than one drug-responsive anxiety syndrome, with one of these (involving panic attacks) being imipramine-responsive (Klein, 1964). This and other discoveries by Don and his colleagues at the Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons and New York State Psychiatric Institute had a heavy influence on the development of DSM-III criteria that began to differentiate what had been “anxiety neurosis” into the anxiety disorders that we now address in DSM-5 and ICD-11. Notably, the recognition of the utility of tricyclic antidepressants such as imipramine in the treatment of panic disorder revolutionized the pharmacological management of panic disorder and, some might argue, all of the anxiety disorders. Don and his colleagues also tested one of the first—and remarkably enduring—hypotheses about the neurobiology of panic disorder, that being a theory of carbon dioxide sensitivity and dysfunctional suffocation alarm in panic disorder (Goetz, Klein, Papp, Martinez, & Gorman, 2001; Papp et al., 1997).

It is hard to provide a perspective on how influential Don’s work was on those of us who began our careers in the past century, interested in the neurobiology of anxiety and related disorders. Don was a mentor to many of the senior investigators who now populate this area of research. Although I did not have the opportunity to train with Don, he had on me—and on many others—a sizeable influence on our careers. I vividly remember my first ACNP meeting in Puerto Rico, seeing Don enjoying a beverage on the beach, and summoning the courage to walk up to him and introduce myself. For many subsequent years, I could count on getting a letter (and later an email) from Don commenting on a paper my colleagues and I had published, providing his perspective on the paper including suggestions for how to think about the results differently and how to design a more incisive study next time around.

The Anxiety and Depression Association of American (ADAA) has for many years recognized Don’s outsized contributions to anxiety disorders research through the awarding of the Donald F. Klein Early Career Investigator Award.

Condolences may be sent to Don’s wife, Dr. Rachel Klein, his daughters and grandchildren: 1016 Fifth Avenue, Apartment 14D, New York, NY 10028.

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REFERENCES


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