

**PATRICIA J. O'MORCHOE, MD (1930-2003):
A LYMPH HEART OF LYMPHOLOGY**



On July 5, 2003 the world lost a prominent lymphologist, all those who knew her lost a true friend and colleague, and her family lost a superb and loving role model. She is sorely missed by all. Dr. Patricia Jean O'Morchoe was Professor and Head of Pathology and Professor of Cell and Structural Biology at the University of Illinois College of Medicine at Urbana-Champaign. In 1997, she was diagnosed with metastatic melanoma of the maxillary sinus and given about six months to live. She died six years later having fought this dreaded disease with her characteristic courage and fortitude and with the aid of surgery, radiation therapy, chemotherapy, and immunotherapy.

Jean O'Morchoe (many knew her as Patricia) received her undergraduate education at Trinity College, University of Dublin, Ireland, and obtained her medical degree from the University of Dublin School of Medicine in 1955. She later obtained a postgraduate medical degree (M.D.), requiring a dissertation and oral examination,

from Dublin University. She completed a rotating internship in Medicine, Surgery, and Obstetrics and Gynecology at the Halifax General Hospital in Halifax, England, and returned to Ireland in 1957 when she was appointed as an Instructor in Physiology at the Dublin University School of Medicine. During her first visit to the United States, she served on the faculty of the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in Cytopathology (1961-1962) and at the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital and Harvard Medical School (1962-1963), where she was involved in both research and diagnostic cytology. On her return to the University of Dublin she was appointed as Lecturer in Physiology. She returned to the United States in 1968 where she rejoined the faculty of the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in Cytopathology. She also served as an adjunct member of the faculty in the Department of Anatomy at the University of Maryland School of Medicine (1970-1974). In 1974, she joined the faculty of Loyola University of Chicago Stritch School of Medicine, where she rose to the rank of Professor in the Departments of Pathology and Anatomy.

Jean O'Morchoe moved to the University of Illinois College of Medicine at Urbana-Champaign in 1984 as Professor of Pathology and Anatomy. She served as Interim Head of the Anatomy Department (1986-1987) prior to its being renamed the Department of Cell and Structural Biology. She was appointed Associate Head of the Department of Pathology in 1991 and became its Head in 1994. She was a member of the Courtesy Staffs of the Covenant Medical Center and the Carle Foundation Hospital, both in Urbana-Champaign, where she consulted in

cytopathology. She was also a staff pathologist at the Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center at Danville, Illinois.

Throughout her academic career Jean O'Morchoe maintained an active research program. In the field of cytopathology, her special research interests lay in the recognition of changes in vaginal exfoliation during the menstrual cycle, and later in diagnostic cytopathology of the thyroid gland. On several occasions, she presented a workshop on the "Correlation of Cytology and Histology" during the Annual Meetings of the American Society of Cytology, and frequently gave this and other workshops to groups across the country. Her research studies on the lymphatic system were carried out in close collaboration with her husband, Charles C.C.O'Morchoe. Together they published numerous articles dealing with lymph formation, normal lymph flow and how these changed under various pathologic and physiologic conditions. Many of their publications concerned the structure and function of the renal lymphatic system. Others focused on the fine structural details of lymph formation in vessels both in vivo and in vitro. Before becoming ill, she and her colleagues were studying the possible role of lymphatic drainage of the aorta in the pathogenesis of atherosclerosis.

Jean O'Morchoe was proud to be a lymphologist and worked hard to promote the discipline. She was a member of the North American Society of Lymphology throughout its existence, and served on its Executive Committee, first as Treasurer and subsequently as Secretary, Vice President and President. She was a long time member of the International Society of Lymphology and served on its Executive Committee from 1991 to 1995. Her knowledge of, and enthusiasm for, the discipline was recognized by her appointment in 1987 as an Associate Editor of Lymphology – a position she held until her death.

She received numerous awards for her teaching including several Golden Apples and the Excellence in Teaching Award of the University of Illinois at Chicago in 1995. Her former Department Head wrote in his

nomination letter for that award: "Her commitment to direct teaching is almost literally incredible, and to departmental administration, indispensable. These achievements are in addition to her extensive work in the development of outstanding multimedia teaching material, to a productive research program, and to leadership in the development of workshop and seminar materials for external venues." In 1997 she was selected as "Boss of the Year" by the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Secretariat. In a letter of support for that honor her secretary wrote "'Stellar' is the best descriptive word I could come up with to describe the performance of my boss. To say that she is outstanding and enthusiastic is simply not good enough!" She was honored with the Special Recognition Award of the College of Medicine at Urbana-Champaign in 1999 after she was forced to leave because of her illness.

The esteem in which she was held by former students – not just medical students but also the many graduate and undergraduate students who worked in her laboratory – was reflected in the way many of them remained in close touch with her after they graduated. Several looked upon her as a second mother. She went to extraordinary pains to help and support them yet she did not hesitate to be frank and to inform them if she thought they were underperforming, especially if she thought they were not working hard enough!

Outside the academic environment she loved to entertain – her dinner parties were well known among relatives, friends and colleagues. She also loved boating and doing needlepoint and cross-stitch – often simultaneously. Many of her exquisite pieces adorn her home in Washington State.

She is survived by her husband Charles C.C. O'Morchoe, who is an Emeritus Dean and Professor at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and who now lives in Washington State. He was President of the International Society of Lymphology from 1991-1993. She is also survived by their two sons, Charles and David, two daughters-in-law, Susan and Patrice and four grandchildren.