

“We advance ourselves and our specialty only with the appreciation of who and what came before.”

Interview with Dr Frederick Kaskel

By Yam-Ngo Lim and Maury Pinsk



Dr Frederick Kaskel is a past president of the American Society of Pediatric Nephrology, was Congress President of the International Pediatric Nephrology Association 15th Scientific Meeting, and has served as Chair for the Council of Nephrology and Urology of the National Kidney Foundation and the Kidney and Urology Foundation of America. He has also served on the Cardiovascular Renal Advisory Panel of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and as Associate Editor for the *Journal of the IPNA Pediatric Nephrology*. In addition, he has been named one of the Best Doctors in America and New York and as a Super Doctor by *New York Times Magazine*

He also chaired History and Archives Committee of IPNA for many years.

What inspired you to choose pediatric nephrology as your specialty?

I first became interested in the subspecialty while a graduate student in Physiology at the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine working in the laboratory of a neonatologist, Leonard I. Kleinman, now deceased. We studied newborn animal models of renal sodium homeostasis based on the clinical observations of premature and term babies who received

excess dietary sodium and became edematous. Defining the mechanisms responsible for the limited ability of the newborn kidney to excrete a sodium load became my doctoral thesis work for the next 4 years and with encouragement from my mentor, I entered medical school and subsequently paediatrics.

What has kept you so passionate about pediatric nephrology throughout the many years?

Our subspecialty is one of the few where you can meet a family with a pregnant mother who has a developing fetus with a kidney problem whom you will follow immediately after birth, throughout infancy, childhood, early and late adolescence and into adulthood. During this lifecourse journey, you may be intimately involved with the family and supervise the delivery of various modalities of caring for a patient with chronic kidney disease, including renal replacement therapies and renal transplantation. Ultimately you may have been privileged to participate in the growth and development of the child as they transition into adulthood. In some exceptional situations, you may even experience the rich rewards of knowing that your patient has themselves become a parent.

You were and are still passionate about the history of pediatric nephrology in general and IPNA in particular, not just for North America but also the rest of the world. You have collated great works on the history of pediatric nephrology. Why do you think it is important to curate the history of Pediatric Nephrology? How does the nephrology community benefit from these efforts, in particular newly trained physicians?

We advance ourselves and our specialty only with the appreciation of who and what came before. The visionaries who saw the importance of defining the specialty of pediatric nephrology realized the need to create a global community of investigators dedicated to this mission. In order to advance our field forward and take advantage of the promising new technologies in genomic medicine, an appreciation of our history and early challenges in the emerging field of pediatric nephrology is essential. Trainees and junior faculty are our best hope to be successful with the challenges and it is the senior members of the community's responsible to provide them with a basis of our rich history. Unfortunately, over the recent past, we are losing many of the first and second generation of pediatric nephrologists who have played such seminal roles in defining the field. Therefore, the time is essential to continue this project and gather as much information of our history as possible.

What were some of your favourite stories about the history of Pediatric nephrology and IPNA?

Reading about the early start of the specialty around the world was fascinating. The emergence of visionaries dating back to the post world war II period such as Henry Barnett and Jack Metcoff who lead the First Conference on Nephrotic Syndrome in 1948, heralded the emergence of the field of nephrology, both pediatric and adult in the U.S. Equally impressive was the leadership and contributions of the early founders of the field in Europe and Asia including It is important to mention that Henry Barnett having witnessed the destruction of the atomic bomb in Japan within weeks after its detonation, was determined to establish a global collaboration of investigators to study kidney disease in children. Along with major other greats Donald Reid, Gavin Arneil, Dick (Richard H.R.) White, Stuart Cameron, and Japanese pediatric nephrologists Professors Yamashita and Kobayashi, the International Study of Kidney Disease in Children emerged in 1966. During this exciting period of growth the origins of Societies of Pediatric Nephrology emerged throughout the world including the European Society of Pediatric Nephrology, the Japanese Society of Pediatric Nephrology, the American Society of Pediatric Nephrology, and eventually the precursor of the International Pediatric Nephrology Association, the First International Symposium of Pediatric Nephrology in Guadalajara, Mexico chaired by Gustavo Gordillo in 1968.



Dr Kaskel presenting about IPNA History at the IPNA Congress in Venice, October 2019

Did you encounter any major challenges as you started to work on this project?

There is limited published data regarding the early origins of the field and the major contributions that heralded its emergence as a separate entity with distinct differences from adult nephrology. What became apparent however, was the seminal role the first generation

of pediatric nephrologists played in treating nephrotic syndrome which laid the foundation for all of nephrology to gain insight in the etiology and best treatment options for this glomerular condition as well as for the formation of scientific nephrology organizations. Along with published book chapters and occasional articles chronicling the history of our field, IPNA and its Secretary General, Isidro Salusky, encouraged John Lewy to interview Ira Greifer, Chester Edelmann, Jr. and Russell Chesney, all deceased, served to fill some gaps in our knowledge once these files were uncovered just a year ago. Again, many of our visionaries have passed on and as time goes by, fewer of their trainees who became the second and third generations of pediatric nephrologists will be able to provide essential historical information.

What is needed at the present is for each Regional Society to identify those senior pediatric nephrologists who played major roles in developing the specialty in their countries, or who were trained by the first generation of leaders, in order to document the unique history of the field for a global archival project. Some of this effort has been performed by many of the Societies comprising IPNA and I am aware of the work in the ESPN, JSPN, ASPN, the Indian Society of Pediatric Nephrology, ALANEPE, African Society of Pediatric Nephrology, and others, in attempting to compile their respective histories for this project.

For future projects for IPNA we should be passing on the torch to engage and encourage new members, trainees, and junior faculty to be the Ambassadors for their region and reflect on who their mentors were or currently are, document the issues confronting the field and develop innovative research aimed at preventing and treating the major challenges in providing the best care throughout the lifecourse of infants, children, and adolescents with kidney disease as they transition into adulthood. IPNA is committed to the History and Archives project and under its leadership, any member can become involved by contacting the leadership and their Regional Council members to make themselves heard.