

Saulo Klahr: third editor of *Kidney International*—in memoriam

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Dr. Saulo Klahr,
1935–2010

On 3 June 2010, after a prolonged illness, nephrology lost a champion of academics, Saulo Klahr. In these busy days of countless e-mails and deadlines, of dealing with budgets, administrative pressures, and attempts to keep up with scientific advances, it is important to remember not only this leader's many contributions to the development of nephrology but also how Saulo helped and encouraged others, invariably making them feel special. It is not my purpose solely to review Saulo's many honors, but I believe that emphasizing his efforts to boost interest in the scientific basis of nephrology while improving the care of patients with kidney disease will stimulate us to emulate him.

First of all, Saulo was an accomplished scientist, equally at home in dealing with complex clinical problems and creating animal- or cell-based models to uncover mechanisms underlying the pathophysiology of kidney diseases. These abilities were quickly recognized at each stage of his career, prompting his eventual election to the American Society for Clinical Investigation and the Association of American Physicians. Besides his scientific accomplishments, he was a gifted leader and served as the director of the Nephrology Division and, later, as co-chair of the Department of Medicine at Washington University in St. Louis. Saulo also had leadership roles in Study Sections of the Veterans Affairs Merit Review Panel, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and American Heart Association Study Sections, as well as the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK) Council, and virtually all the major societies in nephrology. As Saulo would ask in his characteristic quiet, unassuming fashion, What is the basis for this outstanding record?

In 1959, Saulo graduated *summa cum laude* from the School of Medicine of the National University of Colombia. After residency training in Colombia at age 26, he became a fellow with Neal Bricker in the new discipline of nephrology at Washington University in

St. Louis. At age 31, he was appointed as an assistant professor of medicine, and, following support by an Established Investigator Award from the American Heart Association, Saulo developed his broadly based investigative career, publishing 19 papers in journals including *Nature* and the *Journal of Clinical Investigation*. Clearly, he was unhampered by the fact that Spanish was his native language. By age 37, he had become a professor of medicine and director of the Nephrology Division at Washington University School of Medicine, and during the ensuing 19 years, he built an outstanding Division while serving as the Joseph Friedman Professor of Renal Diseases. In 1991, Saulo became the John E. and Adaline Simon Professor of Medicine, physician in chief of the Jewish Hospital of St. Louis, and co-chair of the Department of Medicine.

Besides building an excellent Nephrology Division, Saulo had a special knack for identifying research programs and manuscripts with special potential for advancing the discipline of nephrology or providing insight into the mechanisms underlying uremia or improving the care of patients with kidney disease. This ability was due in part to his broadly based clinical and laboratory research interests but also reflected his commitment to tackling difficult scientific problems generated by kidney diseases. He had a photographic memory and coupled it with an intense ability to concentrate, combining to yield a special work ethic. For example, during his tenure as editor of *Kidney International*, Saulo read every manuscript submitted, and by 2005, this task amounted to focusing editorial attention on more than 1200 submissions. With these attributes, it is easier to understand how he was able to edit more than 20 books and serve on the editorial boards of virtually all journals pertinent to nephrology and hypertension throughout the world. Some of these editorial tasks warrant special attention. In 1977, he became an associate editor of the *Journal of Clinical Investigation*, helping to raise it to its present stature of excellence. In 1992, Saulo accepted

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the position of editor in chief of the *American Journal of Kidney Diseases* and championed that journal's emphasis on translating results from basic science into understanding of clinical aspects of kidney disease. He may be best remembered, however, for his eight-and-a-half-year term as the third editor of *Kidney International*, succeeding Roscoe (Ike) Robinson and Tom Andreoli. Saulo presided over substantial growth of *Kidney International* from 930 submissions in 1990 to the level of 1286 manuscripts in 2004. He made other changes, including a switch in focus that led to clinical studies constituting 83% of articles published in *Kidney International*. This is relevant because he was able to meet the journal's goals of maintaining an unassailable scientific reputation that was global in scope. Indeed, the number of submissions from Africa and Latin America in this period almost doubled, reflecting a major goal of the International Society of Nephrology to "become a truly ecumenical vehicle for the world's renal community."

In addition to his editorial successes, Saulo had major leadership roles at Washington University (see above), the NIH, and the major nephrology societies. For the NIH, Saulo served as a member and then chair of the General Medicine B Study Section and served on the National Kidney and Urologic Diseases Advisory Board and as chair of several NIH Special Emphasis Panels, the Modification of Diet in Renal Disease Steering Committee, and, importantly, the NIDDK Council. Evidence of his many scholarly accomplishments includes his work as the principal investigator on an NIH Program Project Grant from 1972 to 1999 and a co-investigator on two other Program Project Grants.

For the American Society of Nephrology (ASN), Saulo served with great distinction. He was a member of the ASN Council and, from 1985 to 1986, president of the Society. For his contributions to science and the development of nephrology, he received the Presidential Medal and the Society's prestigious John P. Peters Award. Saulo was also very active in the National Kidney Foundation (NKF), receiving the David M. Hume Memorial Award for his scholarship and his service as a member of the NKF Research Grant and Fellowship Committee, chair of the Scientific Advisory Board and Executive Committee, and, finally, NKF president from 1988 to 1990. As was fitting for his many contributions, Saulo was awarded the National Torchbearer Award of the American Kidney Fund for his contributions to patient care.

Saulo received many other citations and awards attesting to his impact on the scientific basis of nephrology, but this man gave much more to his trainees and colleagues. As an example, when I became interested in muscle metabolism, I was studying a model of ureteral ligation. Since I had so little experience with this model, I called Saulo, because he knew the model well. He not only gave me advice but suggested new directions to explore and even sent us some samples for analysis. Thus, despite his demanding work schedule, despite his commitments to advancing science, to meeting editorial deadlines and performing administrative chores in St. Louis and for every major society, Saulo was always available to do what every successful leader does well. He listened, considered, and advised. Nephrology has lost a great leader, and he will be missed by all of us.

DISCLOSURE

The author declared no competing interests.