

In Memoriam

Katherine Metrakos: July 13, 1924–May 12, 2005

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On May 12, 2005, the medical community lost an incredibly devoted, compassionate, and strong person with the death of Katherine Metrakos.

Kay Chrones was born in Weyburn, Saskatchewan, on July 13, 1924, the daughter of Greek immigrants. She obtained her Bachelor of Arts from the University of Saskatchewan in 1945 and her medical degree from McGill University in 1949. While in medical school, she met and later married Julius Metrakos, who was to become Professor of Human Genetics at McGill. They also were a team in clinical research and helped to lay the foundations of our current understanding of the inheritance of the epilepsies. Kay and Julius were internationally renowned as leaders of genetic investigation in epilepsy and were the bridge between the work of William Lennox and the present explosion of genetic epilepsy research.

For many years, they acted as consultants in this area for the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

Their remarkable success was due to the unprecedented pairing of expertise in human genetics with clinical and neurophysiological acumen. In recognition of their work, they received several awards, including the Penfield Award from the Canadian League Against Epilepsy (1987), Hellenic Benevolent Society Award (1992), and, in 1994, an award from the Neurogenetics Research Group of the World Federation of Neurology. Their joint articles are regarded as classics in the field.

For nearly 40 years, Kay was associated with the Montreal Children's Hospital, where she succeeded Herbert Jasper as director of the Neurophysiology Laboratory and founded the Convulsive Disorder Clinic, the pioneering and, for decades, the premier Epilepsy Clinic in Canada. She was an excellent teacher and clinician, freely sharing her experience and knowledge with residents and students. Rarely did a clinic or EEG reading session pass without several pearls of wisdom emerging. She was a devoted mentor to generations of young epileptologists and clinical neurophysiologists. She had great warmth and compassion for the children under her care and endless patience for their parents' questions and concerns. The Clinical Neurophysiology laboratory at the Montreal Children's Hospital has been named after her.

Kay was able to balance her busy professional career with her private life. She was well known for her cooking ability and was a wonderful hostess. It was not uncommon for her to prepare a gourmet dinner from scratch effortlessly on very short notice.

She was a dedicated wife and mother and a staunch supporter of her extended family. The death of her husband and partner, Julius, was a great loss for her. Throughout their lives, they were a great strength to one another. She is survived by her two children, Stephanie and Dimitri, and four grandchildren.