The post World War-II period heralded the onset of continuing growth both in the College of Medicine at the Ohio State University, and the Department of Pediatrics/Columbus Children's Hospital. Doctor Earl Baxter had succeeded long-time Chief of Staff, Doctor Leslie Bigelow, and was the chairman of the Department of Pediatrics.

Doctor Wheeler was born in Youngstown Ohio in 1909. He went on to Harvard Medical School after graduating from Mount Union College in 1929. During the years from 1933 to 1937, he was an intern at Massachusetts Hospital, resident in Pediatrics at Boston Children’s Hospital, and Fellow in Infectious Diseases.

He practiced Pediatrics in Dayton, Ohio, from 1937 to 1939. In 1939 he became a Consultant in Pediatrics to the Michigan Department of Health. He was an Assistant Professor of Pediatrics at Wayne State University, and directed the laboratories at the Children’s Hospital of Michigan from 1941 to 1945.

Coming to Columbus in 1945 at the urging of Doctor Earl Baxter, he pursued his interest in clinical research and teaching in the department. For the next eighteen years he was integral to the growth in faculty and increasing respect for this institution.

Among his many accomplishments was his collaboration with Doctor Thomas Shaffer in solving the control of a staphylococcal epidemic in the OSU newborn nurseries in the early 1950's.

His study of E. Coli diarrheal disease led to isolation and treatment recommendations in hospital ward management and the development and use of one of the first oral rehydration solutions. He cooperated with Doctor Samuel.
Meites, PhD in the early development of micro-techniques for blood chemistries. He contributed to research in Rh Erythroblastosis exchange transfusion procedures and established an Rh Reference Laboratory.

Wheeler was instrumental in the formation of the Central Pediatric Society as a collegial and cohesive influence in the Columbus Pediatric community. He edited the American Journal of Diseases of Children from 1959 to 1962. His election to the presidency of the prestigious American Pediatric Society, (1971-72), serves as evidence of the high regard his academic peers had for him.

By far, however, his legacy is the influence he exerted on, and the devotion he earned from faculty he attracted and residents who came under his tutelage. Serving as a chief resident under Doctor Wheeler gave one further access to his knowledge and teachings. It was a position that was sought after and not as fraught with administrative details as chiefs experience today.

Daily admission rounds with Doctor Wheeler and other faculty were not to be missed. If you were the presenter, you had (and wanted) to be prepared. Exposure to his and/or peer’s questions about diagnosis and management of a particular admission from the previous day could be humbling but enlightening as well, never demeaning. You did not want to disappoint him.

Webster defines “aphorism” as a concise statement of principle, a short sentence containing some imparted truth. “Wheelerisms” was coined for just that reason; clinical pearls of wisdom to be stored for future reference. Example: “If there is no particular reason to use a medication, there’s probably a good reason not to use it.” This certainly applies today to the overuse of antibiotics and its attendant problems.

In 1963, Doctor Wheeler became the second Chairman of Pediatrics at the University of Kentucky in Lexington, where he continued to influence those around him in his humble and unpretentious manner, until his untimely death in 1974. Both Columbus Children’s Hospital and the University of Kentucky established lectureships in his honor.

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