The Canadian Anaesthetists’ Society Medal has been awarded to Dr. Wolfgang Eberhart Spoerel, Professor of Anaesthesia, University of Western Ontario.

Dr. Spoerel was born in Stuttgart, Germany in 1923. He had his college education at the Universities of Tuebingen and Strasbourg and graduated in medicine from the University of Frankfurt/Main, West Germany in 1949. He trained in internal medicine for two years at the University of Frankfurt Medical Clinic before immigrating to Canada in 1951. After a year of rotating internship at the Oshawa General Hospital, he came to London to start residency training in anaesthesia at the Victoria Hospital. During that period he also worked part-time as a demonstrator in the Departments of Physiology and Pharmacology. Then he undertook a one-year fellowship in Anaesthesia at the Mayo Foundation, Rochester, Minnesota. On the invitation of the local anaesthetists, Dr. Spoerel returned to London. He successfully completed the Fellowship examination in Anaesthesia at the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada in 1956.

Dr. Spoerel’s academic career started as an Instructor in Anaesthesia and progressed through the ranks to Clinical Professor in 1963 and Professor in 1966. In 1958 he was appointed Chief of Anaesthesia at Victoria Hospital and Head of the Department of Anaesthesia, University of Western Ontario. He successfully completed his Fellowship examination in Anaesthesia at the Mayo Foundation, Rochester, Minnesota. On the invitation of the local anaesthetists, Dr. Spoerel returned to London. He successfully completed the Fellowship examination in Anaesthesia at the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada in 1956.

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Ontario. In 1972 he became Chief of Anaesthesia at University Hospital and continued as Professor and Chairman. In 1983 he relinquished the post of Chairman and has continued as Professor of Anaesthesia at University Hospital. It is indeed to his credit that he was Head of the Department of Anaesthesia, University of Western Ontario for 25 years. About 200 trainees completed the U.W.O. training program, and took up important positions in Canada, U.S.A. and other countries. In this period, the department certainly grew in stature not only in clinical anaesthesia, but also in teaching and nationally and internationally recognized research.

Dr. Spoerel has had a colourful record as a capable, sympathetic, innovative, clinical anaesthetist, a good clinical teacher, and a productive research scientist. He introduced continuous epidural analgesia for obstetrics in London, and started the Intensive Care Unit at Victoria Hospital in 1962. He was the author or co-author of over 90 publications in national and international journals and these include the first descriptions of transtracheal ventilation and of a streamlined coaxial breathing system (with Dr. J.A. Bain). He has been a member of many scientific societies and has held visiting professorships at many universities, the notable outside-Canada assignments being Northwestern University, Chicago; University of Texas at San Antonio and University of Birmingham, Alabama in U.S.A.; University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand; Guy’s Hospital, London, England; Universität Wien, Austria; Jawaharl Institute of Postgraduate Medical Education and Research, Pondicherry and Maulana Azad Medical School, New Delhi in India and as a member of a Canadian Anaesthetists’ Delegation to the People’s Republic of China.

In addition to clinical anaesthesia, Dr. Spoerel has always been interested in pain problems and from the early seventies he has evinced a keen interest in acupuncture as another modality in the treatment of pain. His visit to China in 1974 re-inforced his belief in the usefulness of this form of treatment and he continues to be actively involved in the Acupuncture Foundation of Ontario and the clinical practice of acupuncture.

Dr. Spoerel has made other notable contributions also. He initiated the formation of Anaesthesia Associates of London. He was medical consultant to the architects and a member of the University d’Anesthésie à l’université de Western Ontario. En 1972 il fut nommé Chef d’Anesthésie au University Hospital et continua sa tâche de Professeur et Directeur. En 1983, il abandonna la fonction de Directeur et continua comme Professeur d’Anesthésie au University Hospital. Il fut Directeur d’Anesthésie à l’Université de Western Ontario pour 25 ans. Deux cents étudiants environ ont complété leur entraînement à l’Université de Western Ontario pour remplir plus tard des postes au Canada, États-Unis et autres pays. Dans cette période, le département a certainement grandi non seulement en anesthésie clinique mais aussi dans l’enseignement et dans la recherche tant du côté national qu’international.


En plus de l’anesthésie clinique, le docteur Spoerel était intéressé aux problèmes de la douleur et depuis le début des années 1970 il cultivait son intérêt à l’acupuncture comme autre modalité du traitement de la douleur. Sa visite à la Chine en 1974 a renforcé sa croyance à l’intérêt de cette forme de traitement et il continua à être activement impliqué à la Fondation d’Acupuncture de l’Ontario ainsi que dans la pratique de l’Acupuncture.

Le docteur Spoerel a aussi d’autres contributions notoires. Il initia la formation des Associés en
Hospital planning committee from 1965 to 1972. He served as the first chairman of the Medical Advisory Committee of the University Hospital and has been serving as Faculty Representative on the Council of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario since 1983.

In spite of all these achievements, Dr. Spoerel has always been humble, unassuming, approachable and helpful. All the members of the Canadian Anaesthetists' Society, including all his colleagues and trainees working in different parts of the world, salute Dr. Spoerel in achieving this well-deserved recognition and pray for his continued health and happiness.


Malgré toutes ces performances le docteur Spoerel était toujours humble, serviable, facile d’approche et non prétentieux. Tous les membres de la Société Canadienne d’Anesthésie incluant ses collègues et résidents travaillant dans différents endroits du monde saluent le docteur Spoerel et le félicitent pour l’obtention de cette médaille et lui souhaitent bonheur et santé.