

December 15, 2009

Renee Habib, a renowned pediatric nephropathologist, passed away recently. RPS had commissioned an English translation of the History of the Renal Biopsy, authored by Dr. Habib. This is now in the RPS website under the history pages, just completed by the RPS historian Samy Iskandar with the help of Laure-Helene Noel, a long time colleague of Dr. Habib at the Hôpital Necker in Paris.

Dr. Habib was born in Casablanca in 1924, certified in Hematology and Anatomic Pathology in 1951 at the University of Paris and went on to study with Jean Hamburger. She first emerged in the international scene at the Ciba symposium in 1961 held at the Children's Hospital on Great Ormond Street, London. She went on to be a dominant nephrologist of her era. This was the era of discovery of renal disease pathogenesis through renal biopsy, which in her own words is "*tightly bound to the birth and development of nephrology*" (see attached history of renal biopsy by Habib). Her many contributions were remarkable for some of the best clinicopathologic studies ever performed, in particular in regards to congenital nephrotic syndrome (CNS). The original description of Diffuse Mesangial Sclerosis, a distinct form of NS in children, was Dr. Habib's master work. She had unique understanding of renal pathology and its significance for disease pathogenesis and patient prognosis. Her talent brought immense insights into kidney diseases unknown at the time by specific name. For example, she astutely described the hyaline matrix deposits in FSGS which she termed "*hyalinose segmentaire focal*". Renee Habib inspired a generation of nephrologists at the Necker to follow at her footsteps, a tradition that is alive today.

For her achievements she was recognized world wide. She was awarded the John Peters Award of the American Society of Nephrology in 1988 (San Antonio), the Distinguished International Medal Award by the National Kidney Foundation in 1991 (Baltimore), and the Jean Hamburger Award by the International Society of Nephrology in 1997 (Sydney) among others. In 1988, French president Mitterrand knighted Renee Habib with The Légion d'honneur. The honor established by Napoleon Bonaparte (National Order of the Legion of Honour) is recognition of merit for the highest civilian achievements.

I first heard of Renee Habib from Luis Salinas-Madrigal who knew Renee Habib personally and praised her exceptional knowledge of pediatric kidney disease referring to her as the "Queen of Nephrology", as she was called by her colleagues and friends. I read her book of Pediatric Nephrology translated into English and sought to read some pages on CNS again and again. Her life was a legend which will live on in Paris, and beyond!

Helen Liapis, MD  
RPS secretary treasurer



Presentation of the 1997 Jean Hamburger Award to Renee Habib and Priscilla Kincaid-Smith by J. Stewart Cameron in *Kidney Int* 1997;51:2056-2059.