



John Fielding Crigler, Jr.



John Fielding Crigler, Jr., M.D., who co-identified the eponymous Crigler-Najjar Syndrome and was one of the founders of the field of pediatric endocrinology, died on May 13, 2018 at his home in Needham, Mass. He was 98. Dr. Crigler retired in 2007 as Chief (Emeritus) of the Division of Endocrinology at Boston Children's Hospital and Associate Professor of Pediatrics (Emeritus) at Harvard Medical School. He founded the Division in 1955, serving as its Chief for 34 years, and helped to establish the field of pediatric endocrinology nationally and internationally.

One of six children, Dr. Crigler was born in Charlotte, North Carolina on September 11, 1919. He was an accomplished cellist and was torn between choosing a career in music or medicine. His decision to pursue a career in medicine was no doubt heavily influenced by his relatives. His mother's sister was one of the three pediatric house staff in the first internship class of the Harriet Lane Home at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine in 1912. Dr. Crigler's other maternal aunt attended nursing school at Hopkins. Thereafter, with the support of the Rockefeller Foundation, she founded the School of Nursing at Peking Union Medical College in China, and upon her return to the United States successively became Head of Nursing at the

University of Chicago, Cornell-NY Hospital, and Johns Hopkins, before retiring.

Dr. Crigler graduated from Duke University in 1939 and entered Johns Hopkins School of Medicine that same year. He met his future wife, Mary Adele Sippel, during his first days of medical school, a coincidence that he described throughout his life as "stumbling on happiness." After an internship at University Hospital in Boston in 1943, where Dr. Crigler and his fellow house staff oversaw the distribution of the entire world's supply of penicillin, Dr. Crigler joined the U.S. Navy as a Medical Officer, seeing action in the amphibious forces of both the Atlantic and Pacific theaters of World War II.

After completing his military service, Dr. Crigler pursued pediatric residency training at Hopkins between 1946 and 1950. As a resident, Dr. Crigler's meticulous attention to patients' histories and physical

examinations, dogged perseverance and insatiable curiosity led to the discovery, with Victor Najjar, of the defect in bilirubin metabolism that bears their names. Throughout his career, his careful analysis of historical data and physical signs in comprehensive longitudinal studies became hallmarks of Dr. Crigler's clinical investigation, scholarship and teaching. He remained at Hopkins to receive training in pediatric endocrinology as the first Endocrine Fellow of Dr. Lawson Wilkins, the founder of the discipline of pediatric endocrinology. Working with Dr. Wilkins, Dr. Crigler defined the life-saving properties of glucocorticoids, which had just become available, in salt-losing congenital adrenal hyperplasia. This work, published in 1952, was chosen in 1998 by Pediatrics as the most important endocrinology paper published in the journal's first 50 years.

In 1955, after 3 years at MIT studying biophysical chemistry and molecular biology, Dr. Crigler, upon the request of Dr. Charles Janeway, joined the faculty of Boston Children's Hospital and Harvard Medical School as the founding Chief of the Division of Endocrinology. He was the first program director and principal investigator of the General Clinical Research Center at Children's Hospital from 1964-76 and Associate Director from 1976-89. During his tenure he established one of the first training programs in pediatric endocrinology through which he trained over 70 endocrinologists. Dr. Crigler attracted an impressive array of fellows, and his disciples became professors of departments of pediatrics or medicine, chairpersons, and deans, making significant contributions to the field. Dr. Crigler modestly reminisced towards the end of his career, "a few were destined to become leaders in their countries and have realized their goals."

He trained many of the current faculty of the Division of Endocrinology, including two of the authors of this Memorial Minute (JM and JW). Always the consummate teacher and scholar, Dr. Crigler's mentoring qualities included a unique blend of insight, humor, integrity, wisdom, passion, precision, generosity, and pathos. Indeed, he relished, and taught many the sheer joy of human interaction. Those who had the good fortune to work with and learn from Dr. Crigler were imbued with his uncompromising commitment to excellence. Indeed, being the student of one of Dr. Crigler's uncompromising lessons was not always pleasant. But as many of our senior current faculty can attest, Dr. Crigler elevated our standards and thereby contributed to our successes, and for this we are grateful.

After stepping down as Division Chief in 1989, Dr. and Mrs. Crigler took a six-month sabbatical at the Sydney Children's Hospital in Australia, both to enjoy a well-deserved respite from the hustle-bustle of Boston, and also to give the new Chief (JM) time to find his bearings. When he returned from sabbatical, Dr. Crigler worked actively until 1992, when he became a dynamic emeritus member of the Division, attending conferences and giving career advice to Fellows and faculty. To the new Division Chief, he was a constant supporter, not without suggestions and the gentlest of criticisms, which helped wisely guide the Division over the ensuing 25 years. In 2007, Dr. Crigler retired from Boston Children's Hospital.

In 1972 Dr. Crigler made a key observation which changed the way in which we think of disorders of metabolism: in patients with type 1 glycogen storage disease (von Gierke) whom he and Dr. Judah Folkman were preparing for portocaval shunt, then standard therapy for this disorder, he noted that the metabolic derangements improved markedly following parenteral hyperalimentation, which led to the concept that these derangements were but a futile attempt to compensate for the underlying disorder. These concepts form the basis for the current treatment of glycogen storage diseases as well as many of other metabolic diseases affecting glucose metabolism. His early studies changed glycogen storage disease from one of lethality in childhood, until today, when under the care of Dr Crigler's students,

Drs. Joseph Wolfsdorf and David Weinstein, these patients are now parents, and are on the cusp of being cured by gene therapy. Dr. Crigler authored over 70 clinical research papers and made important contributions to the pathophysiology and treatment of many other endocrine disorders throughout his career. Principal among these were long-term, cross-institutional studies of central precocious puberty using gonadotropin-releasing hormone agonists led by Dr. William Crowley (Massachusetts General Hospital), in collaboration with Drs. John Crawford (also at MGH), Robert Blizzard (University of Virginia), James Tanner (University College London) and their colleagues.

Dr. Crigler was a founding member of the Pediatric Endocrine Society as well as its 8th president, and was the recipient of the Judson Van Wyk Prize, given by the Pediatric Endocrine Society in recognition of outstanding career achievement in the field that he had helped establish. This award stands in tribute to an exceptional leader whose career is marked by scientific excellence, leadership, integrity, and dedication to the health of children. In 2007, Boston Children's Hospital honored Dr. Crigler and his wife with the creation of the John Fielding Crigler, Jr. and Mary Adele Sippel Crigler Chair in Pediatric Endocrinology at Children's Hospital Boston. Dr. Crigler requested that the endowed chair bearing his name also honor his beloved wife and life partner. She died shortly after the awarding of this honor to her and her husband. This Chair was (and still is) the largest endowment bestowed upon the Division of Endocrinology. Dr. David Ludwig, Professor of Pediatrics at HMS and Professor of Nutrition at Harvard School of Public Health, has served brilliantly as the first incumbent since its inception.

More personally, John and Mary Adele Crigler were loving friends of many of the Division's families, supporting them through their personal lives by welcoming them into their home, offering wise advice, providing emotional support and inspiring them in so many other ways. Most importantly, Dr. Crigler was devoted to Mary Adele, his wife of 63 years, and his children. He is survived by his four children, Catherine Drury Crigler Greenwood of Brookline, MA, John Fielding Crigler III of Irvine, CA, Ann Norris Crigler of South Pasadena, CA, and Virginia Ijams Crigler Guenette of Lenox, MA; four grandchildren, two great grandchildren, and many nieces and nephews.

Respectfully submitted,

Joseph A. Majzoub, Chair
Thomas Carpenter
Joseph I. Wolfsdorf