

Harold Ellis: a surgeon's contribution to anatomy education

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It is safe to say that the majority of Korean anatomists possess either 'Gray's Anatomy' [1] or 'Clinical Anatomy: Applied Anatomy for Students and Junior Doctors' [2]. However, it is likely that their knowledge of Professor Ellis, who has been the author of 'Clinical Anatomy' since 1960 and the leading editor of the 39th edition of Gray's Anatomy [1], is scanty. This paper is not aimed to be a bibliography of Professor Ellis; it is an introduction to this man and his work and discusses how he contributed to the field of anatomy education.

In 1986, while I worked as an intern in a hospital, my teacher Professor Key June Seoung, an anatomist at Seoul National University, Korea, gave me a book titled 'Clinical anatomy: a revision and applied anatomy for clinical students', the First P. G. Asian Economy edition [3]. During my internship and plastic surgery residency training, I referred to that book frequently because it was very easy to find information in it and it contained simple drawings that were easy to understand. For example, one figure in that book shows a clear illustration of how the 6th cervical vertebra corresponds to the lower border of the cricoid cartilage, how the junction of the larynx relates to the trachea, how the junction of pharynx relates to the esophagus, and the level at which the inferior thyroid artery and the middle thyroid vein enter the thyroid gland. After 22 years of owning that book, I

gave the book to my first son who just entered medical school in UK, and subsequently the book became one of his favorite books.

Professor Ellis qualified as a doctor at the University of Oxford in 1948. From 1950-1951, he undertook national service as a Captain in the Royal Army Medical Corps; afterwards he continued his training as a surgical registrar in London, Sheffield and Oxford before taking up a post as a senior lecturer in the University of London. In 1960, he was the foundation chair of surgery at Westminster Hospital, a post which he held until his retirement from practice in 1989. He was also a professor in the Department of Anatomy & Human Sciences at King's College London School of Medicine. After a stint teaching anatomy at the University of Cambridge, he took up his present position as a professor in the Department of Anatomy & Human Sciences at King's College London School of Medicine in 1993.

The first edition of "Clinical Anatomy" was written in 1960 when he had just become the foundation chair of surgery at Westminster Hospital. In 2010, the tenth edition was published as a 50th anniversary edition [2].

In December 2010, I was writing a paper about a British anatomist and I visited the Anatomical Society in Guy's campus to find some of his relics such as the books or the instruments he had used, but met without success. In the Hodgkin's building I met the author of "Clinical Anatomy," Professor Harold Ellis. He was 84 years old at the time. Wearing a green lab jacket, he was teaching medical students in the dissecting room.

In December 2011, I met him again at the winter meeting of the Anatomical Society, which was held at Cardiff University. His lecture entitled 'Learning, using and teaching

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anatomy' was a history of the teaching of anatomy in the UK. His words were like a breath of fresh air and they were a real inspiration. After his lectures, the whole audience gave this living legend in the field of clinical anatomy a huge round of applause.

Professor Ellis should be remembered as a pioneering clinical anatomist as well as a proficient surgeon. He left a very fine user-friendly book titled "Clinical Anatomy." I believe more new editions of this book are forthcoming. There is an oriental saying which states that "Tigers leave fine hides when they die, and people leave their names on their departure." Professor Ellis will leave his good name – a name that will be

remembered for generations to come.

References

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