

Samuel Salomon
1925-2008



Samuel Solomon was a director of the McGill Centre for Research on Endocrine Mechanisms and one of the world's foremost experts on steroids.

His expertise in steroid abuse was, in part, responsible for having Canadian sprinter Ben Johnson stripped of the gold medal he was awarded at the 1988 Seoul Olympics.

Solomon died Dec. 13 at his home in Westmount of complications following a stroke, one week after his 83rd birthday.

"Sam Solomon's knowledge of steroid biochemistry combined with his research on the fundamental molecular signaling in early development and his passion as a researcher and teacher led to major innovations in the then new field of molecular endocrinology and development," said Dr. David Goltzman, professor of Medicine and Physiology at McGill University.

"He was a terrific mentor and he trained an awful lot of good people. The people he trained benefited not only from his knowledge, but from his ability to expand their horizons, stimulate their intellectual curiosity and promote their careers."

Schmuel Shlonyogura was born in Brest-Litvosk, Poland, Dec. 5, 1925. His father, who manufactured boots for the Russian and Polish armies, came to Montreal in search of a better life in 1928. In 1935, his wife and family followed when Samuel was 9 years old. He attended Baron Byng High School before being accepted at McGill University in 1944 where he earned his BSc in 1947. He studied at University of California, Berkeley, then returned to McGill to complete his doctorate in 1953. He was an assistant professor at Columbia University's College of Physicians and Surgeons before returning to McGill in 1960 as an associate professor in the Department of Biochemistry.

In 1965 he became an associate professor and did research on how steroids and peptides are made and how these key molecules effect such things as fetal lung development and regulation of the immune system.

By 1967, he had been appointed director of the Endocrine Laboratory at the Royal Victoria Hospital and was promoted to a full professorship in biochemistry and experimental medicine at McGill.

In 1987, Solomon was appointed a scientific adviser on steroids to the Dubin commission on banned practices in sport. He was a chairman of the steering committee for the International Group for Steroid Hormones which, in 1988, advised Sports Canada on Ben Johnson's use of anabolic steroids. Solomon was also scientific adviser to the National Football League and served as Quebec regional director of the Medical Research Council of Canada before he retired.

He also served in various administrative positions at McGill as a member of the university Senate, its Board of Governors and its Executive Committee on Industrial Research.

A three time recipient of Banting Foundation research grants, Solomon also received the Royal Society of Canada's McLaughlin Medal for important medical research in 1989.

He was appointed an Officer of the Order of Canada in 1997.

"Our father knew his mind, set his rudder straight, was unwavering. You always knew where he stood, there was nothing wishy-washy about him," his son, David, told mourners at the funeral on Tuesday,

"Throughout his professional life, our father was passionate about doing science well, asking big questions, teaching intellectual curiosity and sharing this with others.

"He viewed himself foremost as an educator and wanted to impart to his many students an enthusiasm for science and the qualities of doing science well, asking the right questions, and providing advice to many. He knew how to show up, to pay attention, to help others."

Solomon owned a farm at Ways Mills, on the Vermont border near Sherbrooke, where, for relaxation, he enjoyed cultivating garden vegetables.

He is survived by their three sons, and by Augusta (Dusty) Vineberg, his second wife, a former Montreal Star journalist he married in 1974.

Published in The Gazette
"Steroid expert had a passionate commitment to science"
December 21, 2008