

Vale Ivor Barry Pless

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Our friend and colleague Dr. Ivan Barry Pless, the founding editor of *Injury Prevention*, died on 1 August 2023.

A paediatrician, epidemiologist and Professor Emeritus at McGill University, Barry was a tireless advocate for children's health with a lifetime of professional achievement.

A beautiful and accomplished writer his curriculum vitae ran more than 100 pages and he continued editing and reviewing scientific articles to the end. In addition to hundreds of academic articles and books, he wrote a memoir of his life (*Barry's Bits*), a collection of stories (*Did I Ever Tell You?*) and several children's books. Dozens of letters to the editor reflected his commitment to community and strong opinions. He loved music and art. He played the clarinet, sang with great enthusiasm (but badly) and diligently tried to learn to play the piano at the age of 85.

In recognition of his major contributions to public health, especially child injury prevention, his native Canada named him a Member of the Order of Canada in 1993 and he was promoted to Officer of the Order of Canada in 2017.

BARRY IN PUBLIC HEALTH

Barry was the father and grandfather of paediatric injury prevention and control. He published his first paper on this in 1972, when most readers of this journal had not yet been born and certainly before any of the rest of us were active in research in this field. He was one of the first people to study the issue of appropriate restraints for children in motor vehicles and the effects of legislation on improving restraint use.

Barry was instrumental in developing an injury surveillance system in emergency departments across Canada. This was really one of the first surveillance systems to provide national-level estimates of medically treated injuries. It set the stage for what many of us now view as 'big data' from electronic health records used to provide information about the epidemiology of injuries and other medical problems.

One of the things that always struck me about Barry was his critical thinking and careful application of scientific methods to study injury problems. He was both a paediatrician and epidemiologist and combines these skills to make huge advances in the field. As we all know, Barry was the founding editor of *Injury Prevention* which was started in 1994 and he served in this role for the next 15 years. For those of us present at the birth of the journal, we saw the enormous amount of work and effort it took to get this journal off the ground and to keep it

running. Barry used all of his skills to make the journal part of the BMJ family and worked with the publisher to make the journal a success. Barry was the natural choice to be the founding editor of the journal and I am completely convinced that it would not have been a success without Barry at the helm. He dealt with the issues of financing, establishing an international editorial board and careful editing of submitted manuscripts to bring them to a high level of scholarship. Barry did this because of his dedication to the injury field and his commitment to disseminating work of scholars in the field across the globe.

One or the other characteristics that stands out with Barry was his mentoring of trainees and junior faculty. While there are many, it is important to point out some outstanding individuals that Barry mentored in this field. Richard Stanwick was a mentee 1981 and went on to become a leader of paediatric injury control in Canada. Terry Nolan was a trainee of Barry's in the mid 1980s and became a leading figure in injury control in Australia. Colin McArthur and Alison McPherson became important injury researchers at the Hospital for Sick Kids. Brent Hagel has led the development of injury control activities in Alberta. All these individuals were nurtured by Barry to become leading scientists in the field.

Barry received many honours including the order of Canada, the Queen's Golden Jubilee medal, the Distinguished Career Award from the American public health association, election to the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences, and the lifetime achievement award from the Red Cross of Canada. Barry was a member of the board of directors of Society for the Advancement of Violence and Injury Research (SAVIR) and served faithfully in that position. Barry was a cofounder of Safe Kids Canada and chaired their technical advisory committee for many years. He also served on the scientific committee for the International Conference on Injury Prevention and control for a number of meetings. He was an invited speaker around the world and asked to sit on many advisory committees and boards.

On a personal note, Barry was an important mentor to me. He taught me about injury research. He also taught me what it meant to be a good editor of a scientific journal. He gave selflessly to others and his advice and guidance were so useful. Importantly, he also had high expectations for people and we all strove to live up to this. To me, he was a giant in the field and we all owe him a deep debt of gratitude



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BARRY AS EDITOR

Injury Prevention first appeared in March 1995 and Barry was Editor to 2007. In reflecting on its establishment, Barry was the first to say that many people contributed to its birth and to its quality. The rest of us are in no doubt that neither its establishment nor its quality would have been the same without him, without his knowledge, skill, drive, high standards and his personality.

In reflecting on the journal, Barry spoke of the need to solidify the place of prevention in the broader world of medicine and public health. He believed that a professional journal was an essential step in this.¹ He wrote about the need to reach out to ‘would-be’ readers in other disciplines and to meet the challenge of changing how others view the injury epidemic. Although the journal was first focusing on childhood injury prevention, Barry soon advocated a broader perspective, to include all age groups, mechanisms, contexts and target populations. He argued that the most formidable of the challenges he faced as editor was to make a bridge between researchers and practitioners. To this end, he worked to minimise jargon and to ensure that there was a section on ‘implications for prevention’. Barry referred to the readers of the Journal as likely to be fervent zealots for injury prevention, doing all they can to get the message to all who will listen.² He also was committed to publishing studies from around the world, including from low-resourced countries. His commitment took the form of working with authors from those

countries to publish studies that were important contributions to the global effort to reduce the burden of injuries. Barry used his erudition and mastery of language combined with his never-ending kindness to make this work.

Barry wrote about the world of the academic as being strange and that of the researcher even stranger and that most who choose this path do so in the belief that benefits far outweigh sacrifices.³ That few have illusions of making great discoveries, but all are driven by the challenges of trying to find answers. In this context, he reflected on what he had said in accepting the Ross Award from the Canadian Pediatric Society about the need to thank families and metaphorical families (teachers, colleagues and trainees) before we die, rather than in posthumous eulogies. In keeping with who he was, the stories he told of one of his mentors were grateful, thoughtful and warm.

Barry was a terrific editor and a great contributor to our field (and others). I trust that he knew the height of the esteem and the depth of respect and affection in which we, the injury prevention community and numerous persons who benefited from his mentoring, held him. We miss him already.

FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Many authors and readers of *Injury Prevention*, myself included, were directly or indirectly influenced by Professor Barry Pless. This item describes just some of his contributions to our journal and the lasting impact he had on the item’s three authors. I invite you to also share your memories of Barry and how he helped shape the injury prevention field for you. Please do this by using the Rapid Response function linked to this item. Your words will be added to those provided by others and serve as a lasting online record of Barry’s legacy.

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