**The Michael J Cousins Lifetime Achievement Award Speech- International Neuromodulation Society Annual Scientific Meeting- Sydney.**

Michael was born in Sydney in 1939. His first major contact with medicine came when he broke his nose playing rugby and required surgical correction. From his experience and exposure, a fire was lit to do medicine. He dually did so, graduating in 1963 from the University of Sydney. Of relevance is that his allocated hospital for his clinical years was Royal North Shore Hospital. During his medical school tenure, he worked as a porter at the hospital and I believe this is where he first started honing his skills, now legendary, with dealing with hospital administrations.

His residency was dually conducted at St George Hospital and Michael made the momentous decision to pursue a career in Anaesthesia. For this he returned to what had now become his alma mater at Royal North Shore Hospital. He distinguished himself by being awarded an International Fellowship by his University and so began two lifelong traits- 1, a pursuit of excellence and 2, a desire to learn from the very best. Of course, as the wheel has turned full circle it is, we, Sir, who have learned the very best from you.

He travelled to Canada and commenced a Post-Doctoral work with Philip Bromage, the doyenne of regional anaesthesia. This was another turning point in Michael’s life. His first research was on blood flow through a vascular surgical graft and finding it improved with improved pain control in the patient. This was a revolutionary concept at the time.

He was appointed Associate Professor of Anaesthesia at Stanford University in 1970 and worked with another legendary Professor, Richard Mazze, investigating the organ toxicity of inhalational agents. By the age of 35 he had published 36 papers and was awarded his Doctorate in Medicine.

Michael spent time overseas interacting with other great Giants, namely Ronald Melzack, Patrick Wall, and the founding father of Pain Medicine John J Bonica. The standards these men set naturally came to be the standards that Michael would hold, refine further, and bring back to his mother country.

The prodigal son returned to become the Foundational Professor of Anaesthesia and Intensive Care at Flinders University in Adelaide. This was the first chair of Anaesthesia and Intensive Care to be bestowed in this country. Here he began transforming the landscape of pain medicine and neuromodulation in this country, building a world class pain clinic and research unit at Flinders.

The 1980’s were a remarkable period of clinical, academic and administrative achievement. 36 papers became 139 papers- that is one paper published every 5 weeks continuously for a decade. He kicked it of in 1980 with his Textbook of Neural Blockade which he co-edited with Phillip Bridenbaugh. It remains in publication.

His early neuromodulation work commenced in 1979 around spinal and epidural delivery of opioids for pain relief with a long term collaboration with Laurie Mather, an Australian Scientist and Pharmacologist. Michael’s research on neuraxial opioids was one of the founding pillars of knowledge in this area. For some men this would warrant resting on his laurels, but this was followed with a prodigious output on spinal cord injury and pain management.

On the administration front he became the Founding President of the Australian Pain Society in 1979, President of the International Association of the Study of Pain in 1987. He achieved the enlistment of the World Health Organisation into the cause of pain relief which produced profound changes in global attitudes to acute and cancer pain relief.

In 1990 he returned to Sydney, to Sydney University and to Royal North Shore Hospital, becoming the Founding Foundation Professor of Anaesthesia and Pain Management. He built a second world class unit attracting, supporting and developing a generation of clinicians and researchers both in Australia and overseas Post Docs.

By 2003 he had published 2008 papers, steadily logging a published paper every 8 weeks for 32 years.

He envisaged, developed, and saw to fruition the Faculty of Pain Medicine becoming its inaugural Dean in 1999. A unique collaboration of the Colleges of Anaesthesia, Medicine, Surgery, Psychiatry and Rehabilitation Medicine it remains one of his finest achievements and has a peerless reputation as an educational and accreditation body today.

He established the working group that produced the first Evidenced Based Medicine review of acute pain and the book Acute Pain Management- the Evidence is in planning for a 5th edition and is internationally recognised.

Time and space does not permit me to list all his contributions and achievements but I want to highlight one. Michael’s publication in 2000 of Acute Pain Relief- a Basic Human Right and in 2004 his paper with Dan Carr “Pain Relief a Universal Human Right” has led to generational, institutional, and Governmental change in the way human beings are treated on this planet whether that be survivors of torture or dementia patients or Third World access to analgesics. For this alone, Michael, we applaud you.

His interest in neuromodulation never wavered and he added spinal cord stimulation to his clinic’s armamentarium in the 1980’s and 1990’s and published on this also. He began a collaboration with an engineer with wild ideas on measuring action potentials in the spine and his scientific foundational work and intellectual support has helped the imminent birth of a home grown commercially available spinal cord stimulator system.

I have not spoken of Michael J Cousins the man. What you may not know is that he has been a keen water sports enthusiast and surf skier and could often be found on the weekend enjoying the Australian ocean at Palm Beach. Michael has been known at long, boring evening meetings to pour out a nip of Johnny Walker Black Label Whiskey to help him endure those whose verbiage exceeded their intellect. I have seen him gently guide administrators into decisions they did not know they needed to make. With his wife Michelle they have been a formidable team in overcoming system and systemic inertia that prevented the right thing being done.

So where are we now? 236 papers and multiple textbooks, apart from the Gait Control paper, he has one of the most referenced papers in the history of analgesia with the 1984 review paper on the spinal route of analgesia.

You have been given many awards. A Doctorate of Science from your University, the Pain Clinic renamed in your honour from your hospital- the Michael J Cousins Pain Management Unit. A member of the Order of Australia and then an Officer of the Order of Australia from your country. You have the respect and gratitude of this society for your 50 year devotion to medicine and its advancement but most of all you have the unspoken gratitude of hundreds of thousands, of millions of people across the globe who have benefited from your efforts. You are a true Giant of Neuromodulation and we rise to give thanks to your work.