BOOK REVIEW

Raymond Adams: A Life of Mind and Muscle

Robert Laureno
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288 pages; $55.00

This exemplary book by Robert Laureno on the life and mind of Dr Raymond D. Adams (1911–2008) highlights Dr Adams’ critical role in 20th-century clinical neurology and experimental neuropathology. As a practicing clinical neurologist, he was also active in analyzing brain tissue. He was fortunate in being able to maintain 20- and 30-year relationships with patients with severe neurological diseases and ultimately to provide the final diagnosis through autopsy. The extent of the contributions that Dr Adams made in the area of neuropathology is astounding; there is not a single area of the field that he left untouched.

The well-written introductory essay gives an overview of his life and educational work. The subsequent sections of the book contain actual interviews with Dr Adams, highlighting the accomplishments of each period. The appendices also provide instructive commentary on his struggles as an academic neurologist, many of which seem to be universal to academia.

Medical educators can empathize with his struggles. Dr Adams put together the premier teaching volume in neuropathology. In 1968, the Harvard Medical School caved in to students who claimed that the course was too intensive for a practicing clinician. These students failed to recognize a unique opportunity to learn neuropathology from a master.

One wonders how someone with the time and energy to write hundreds of manuscripts and dozens of textbooks of neurology and neuropathology could also devote time to his family. Clearly, his closest companions were colleagues in neurology and neuropathology. In addition, Laureno offers glimpses of Raymond Adams as a child, husband, and father.

Dr Adams was the master of neuropathologic correlation and was instrumental in many discoveries that shaped experimental neurology in the last century. At times, the book drags and repeats itself. The reader might wish for more insights on how to improve the teaching of neuropathology in both medical school and residency programs, given Dr Adams’ unprecedented contributions in these fields. Dr Adams did not make headlines by winning all the famous prizes; his headlines were made by virtue of the large body of experimental work that has made a permanent impact on the profession.

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