

BIOGRAPHY of John C. Floyd, Jr., M.D.

An endocrinologist and specialist in diabetes mellitus, John C. Floyd, Jr., M.D., was known for his expertise in and dedication to scientific research, medical education, and patient care. Over a career of more than 30 years, his work demonstrated the importance of integrating all of these areas of medical endeavor in establishing patient-centered, innovative care for the specific needs of the diabetic patient. He served on the faculty of the University of Michigan's Department of Internal Medicine, in the division of Endocrinology and Metabolism (E&M), from 1961 until his retirement 1992 at which time he was appointed Professor Emeritus. The E&M division was later renamed Metabolism, Endocrinology, and Diabetes (MEND) to more accurately reflect that division's work.

Dr. Floyd was born in Olla, Louisiana, and raised in Baton Rouge. He graduated from Louisiana State University (LSU) in 1949 with a B.S. in chemistry and went on to the California Institute of Technology for graduate studies. However, after a few months, he decided that medicine, which combined his love of science with his interest in people, might be a more fulfilling career than chemistry. Returning to Louisiana, he enrolled at the LSU School of Medicine and received his medical degree in 1954.

Upon graduation from LSU, Dr. Floyd completed his internship, residency, and further postdoctoral training at the University of Michigan's Division of Nuclear Medicine in the Department of Internal Medicine. It was an intern in 1955, during his surgical rotation, that he was by chance assigned to observe what proved to be a ground-breaking operation. Based upon extensive metabolic studies, Dr. Jerome Conn, Chief of the E&M division, and his colleagues had hypothesized that the patient's disease was caused by over-production of an adrenal hormone, a previously undescribed condition Dr. Conn termed "primary aldosteronism", and surgical removal of both adrenal glands was planned. However, to what has been described as "the immense delight" of Dr. Conn and other observers in the operating room, the surgeon found a benign tumor on one adrenal. The tumor was removed, the patient's symptoms subsequently abated and this linking of an adrenal tumor to primary aldosteronism led to new treatments for that condition. It was this early experience that piqued Dr. Floyd's interest in the field of endocrinology.

In 1959, having completed his post-graduate training at Michigan, Dr. Floyd accepted an appointment at LSU as Instructor of Internal Medicine. However, his intense interest in clinical research led him to pursue returning to the University of Michigan. Then E&M faculty member Dr. Stefan Fajans (presently MEND Professor Emeritus) recalls receiving the phone call from Dr. Floyd: "He called me one evening and asked whether there might be a place for him in our Division of Endocrinology and Metabolism, and indeed there was for someone of John's

caliber.” Dr. Floyd returned to Michigan as a Fellow in the E&M division in 1960 and was appointed to the medical faculty the following year. It was during this time that he began to focus his attention on diabetes-related research and the treatment and care of diabetic patients; these interests were to become his life-long work.

The 1960’s were an exciting time for investigators in the E&M division at Michigan. Working together with their colleagues, Dr. Fajans and Dr. Floyd described the effects of amino acids and proteins on insulin secretion in both healthy and diseased subjects, and measured insulin secretion in hypoglycemic states. Following the publication by Drs. Yalow and Berson of their immunoassay for insulin -- an assay which revolutionized the study of diabetes by allowing researchers to measure minute levels of insulin in the blood – Dr. Floyd traveled to their New York laboratory to learn the technique. Upon his return, he set up the protocol in the E&M lab, making the U of M only the second or third place in the world to employ this innovative assay at that time. Always inquisitive, Dr. Floyd was later to become one of the early investigators into the physiological role of human pancreatic polypeptide. His research also covered areas of more immediate interest to the diabetic patient, including studies on use of the insulin pump, and on the effectiveness of various treatment regimes for managing diabetes.

Research, however, was only one of Dr. Floyd’s professional interests. Following in the footsteps of his father, a professor at LSU, Dr. Floyd was a dedicated and rigorous teacher and mentor who passed on his practical experience and insights to his students with humor and incisiveness. He lectured in graduate and postgraduate courses, oversaw student research, provided clinical training and supervision of medical Residents and Fellows, and spoke at national and international conferences on diabetes-related topics.

In his clinical practice, Dr. Floyd focused on the care of diabetic patients. He understood the particular importance of the patient-physician relationship in the successful management of diabetes, a disease which requires the patient to exercise extensive and ongoing self-care and often to make significant changes in lifestyle. Dr. Floyd was known for his intuitive understanding of the patient sitting before him and for the personal care and attention he gave to each of his patients. These attributes along with his ability to formulate an astute diagnostic question - and to listen carefully to the response - led him to excel in clinical work.

Dr. Floyd’s interests in education, research, and patient care became more formally intertwined in the mid-1970s. Together with their colleagues, Dr. Fajans and Dr. Floyd spearheaded a successful application to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) for funding to establish a Diabetes Training and Research Center, one of only six such centers to be funded by the NIH. Opening in 1977, the

Michigan Diabetes Research and Training Center (MDRTC) was supported by the largest grant which the University of Michigan had received up to that time. As Director of the Diabetes Center Unit and Diabetes Center Unit Clinic (1977-1986) within the MDRTC, Dr. Floyd worked to integrate findings from the extensive research on diabetes into the practical care of the patient; as Associate Director of the MDRTC during this same period, his executive and interpersonal skills allowed him to help lead these centers into the forefront of diabetes-related research, education, and innovative patient treatment. Today, over thirty years later, the MDRTC is one of only seven NIH Diabetes Research and Training Centers in the United States and remains a leading center for diabetes research and diabetic patient care.

Dr. Floyd passed away in 2006. In 2007, the John C. Floyd, Jr., Memorial Fellows' Lecture in Metabolism, Endocrinology and Diabetes was established by the MEND faculty, with the support of his wife of 54 years, Esther Martin Floyd. Each year, the speaker for the lecture is chosen by the MEND Fellows, who also issue the invitation, schedule and coordinate the visit, and select one of their members to introduce the speaker. The Floyd lecture thus honors Dr. Floyd's commitment to post-graduate medical education and recognizes his outstanding dedication, contribution, and service in the field of endocrinology at the University of Michigan. Past speakers for the lecture series have included Dr. Stefan Fajans, Professor Emeritus in the Division of Metabolism, Endocrinology & Diabetes at the University of Michigan; Dr. David M. Nathan, Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School; and Dr. Chris Saudek, Hugh P. McCormick Professor of Endocrinology and Metabolism, Johns Hopkins Hospital.