

**A/Professor Paul Spira**  
**Australia**



**A/Prof Paul Spira** passed away on 29 December 2023 at home surrounded by his loving family.

I have the sad, but most honoured, privilege to recognize, on behalf of the Australian and New Zealand Headache Society, the passing of Associate Professor Paul Spira. From the outset, I must acknowledge the great generosity of Katherine Spira and her family for allowing me to use excerpts from Katherine's most moving recognition of her father in her eulogy for him. With the passing of Professor Lance a few years ago and now, with that of Paul Spira, we have lost two of our most outstanding Neurologists, both of whom had a passionate interest in headache.

Paul was born in 1946 in Czechoslovakia. His family migrated to Israel in 1947 and then moved to Australia in 1954 where they settled in Coogee, Sydney. Paul was enrolled in Coogee Public School and completed his Secondary Education at Randwick Boy's High School. He excelled in his leaving certificate and was awarded a Commonwealth Scholarship to study medicine at the University of Sydney.

In his second year of residency, Paul encountered Professor James Lance, the doyen of Australian Neurology, who became his mentor. Under his guidance Paul undertook advanced training in Neurology as well as doing ground-breaking research in vascular aspects of migraine. In 1976 he met his wife to-be Anne. They married and then moved to London for a year, where Paul completed his training at the National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery at Queen's Square, London.

On his return to Australia in 1978, Paul took up a position at the Prince Henry and Prince of Wales Hospitals. His ward rounds were always keenly looked forward to by the medical staff as they knew that they would learn so much from Paul. In terms of Paul's great commitment to headache, he was a founding member of the Australia Headache Society, a councillor and then became its President in 1997. When he finally retired from the public hospital system he had delivered a phenomenal 50 years of outstanding service to the patients he cared for at the Prince Henry and Prince of Wales Hospitals.

From a personal point of view, having been taught by him as a medical student, up until being his colleague, I would like to share my personal thoughts about him. One thing that always struck me was that every time you met him, or even spoke to him on the phone, no matter what time it was, his immediate greeting was always positive, generous and genuine, in that he would always first ask how you, the caller, was. In addition, I was always struck by his genuine humility and I never heard a single cross word from Paul in all the many years I knew him.

Paul was the consummate neurological clinician, diagnostician and teacher. His opinion was always invaluable and, therefore, highly sought after by many. I remember the many times he would comment in our Neurological Grand Rounds that a particular aspect of a case “troubled” him. He was nearly always right, meaning that we had somehow failed to consider an alternative a diagnosis. Because of his amazing clinical acumen, many of Paul’s colleagues, including me, would regularly seek out his sage opinion, especially when the rest of us had run out of ideas. Our Neurological Grand Rounds were always enriched by his presence and wisdom, and the poorer, without him.

Paul, over his long career, taught innumerable medical students, junior doctors, basic physician registrars and neurology advanced trainees. In particular, he regularly spent many hours helping our basic physician trainees when facing their barrier examinations. I think there is no doubt that some of them passed their neurological cases because of Paul’s teaching. Paul was also a regular presenter at ANZAN’s Brain School and also gave many talks to GPs, and not only about headache.

Paul also was an expert on the neurological examination, devising, and passing on, new ways to elicit physical signs, in a better, or more reliable way, than what we had always been taught traditionally, whether for students, trainees or consultants.

Paul had a profound interest in teaching at all levels. I remember full-well the many times he would identify critical parts of the patient’s history and signs in the physical examination. He was awarded the best consultant Teacher prize at POW hospital several times. He was also awarded the UNSW Dean’s award for best conjoint teacher. He published several papers, most of which were related to headache. He did all of these things despite running a very busy private clinical practice.

Outside of medicine, Paul had many interests. He was an adventurer- a keen yachtsman who amongst other endeavours skippered his boat and loyal crew through two Sydney to Hobart races. As a junior doctor, whilst working as a locum flying doctor in remote Australia, he befriended a pilot, who taught him how to fly. As a young man he was a lover of the great outdoors enjoying hiking and caving and throughout life travelled extensively Australia and New Zealand, Europe, the Americas and the Middle East. He loved English literature, was a gifted storyteller, followed politics and could sculpt in clay. He had an interest in electronics and mechanics loved tinkering, inventing and repairing in his home workshop.

Paul passed away at home on 29/12/2023 after a brief illness. He is survived by his wife Anne, his brother Tommy, his children Katherine, Amy, Elliott and Joel, and five grandchildren.

Paul will not only be remembered by his family and friends, but also by the many medical students, doctors and neurologists that he taught and inspired, as well as the many thousands of patients for whom he cared for deeply for over 50 years. We will all miss him greatly.

Professor Alessandro Zagami  
Australia and New Zealand Headache Society