

# Antoine Helewa

By Barbara Stokes, PT, with contributions from Joan M. Walker, PhD

Antoine Helewa passed away on January 30, 2011, after a distinguished career spanning over 50 years dedicated to improving the lives of those with arthritis. He was an educator, researcher, a leader of his profession, and mentor to many.

Born in Haifa, Israel, he received his diploma in physiotherapy before coming to Canada where, as a Fellow of The Arthritis Society (TAS), he obtained a Teacher's Certificate in 1964. He taught at the University of Toronto and the University of Manitoba before joining TAS' Ontario Division as Director of Professional Services, a post he held for 16 years. There, he fostered collaborative, multidisciplinary and evidence-based practices while providing therapists with opportunities for learning and professional growth. He was instrumental in expanding the program from one based solely in southern Ontario into northern Ontario, while adding occupational therapy and social-work services. Many therapists hired in the 70s and 80s remain employed by TAS because Antoine instilled in them his passion, challenging them to think critically and to take leading roles in the provision of evidence-based care.

A Research Associate at the Wellesley Hospital for 10 years, he collaborated with the University of Toronto Rheumatic Diseases Unit to develop and implement the annual training program "The total assessment of inflammatory polyarthritis by physiotherapists and occupational therapists." Thirty-five years later, it has trained nearly 1,000 therapists in Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

In 1977, he received a Master's Degree in Epidemiology from McMaster University and continued to build collaborative relationships as a researcher. He was the chairperson of the Multicenter Trial Group. Over several decades, he made important contributions to research, often in collaboration with Charles Goldsmith and Dr. Hugh Smythe. He was an investigator on 23 research grants (14 as the primary investigator), and an author on 31 publications and 53 peer-reviewed presentations.

In 1985, he became Chairman of the School of Physical Therapy at the University of Western Ontario (UWO). There, he was influential in UWO's decision to offer a Master's degree program and professional education for individuals



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with doctoral degrees in other subjects. Antoine was made an Emeritus Professor in 2002.

In 1996, he was the co-editor of *Physical Therapy in Arthritis*, the first comprehensive textbook for therapists focusing on arthritis. He was co-editor of the second edition (2004) and, until his death, was seeking support for a third edition. In 2000, he and Joan M. Walker published *Critical Evaluation of Research in Physical Rehabilitation*, a milestone in clinical decision-making for rehabilitation specialists. Believing that

individuals with arthritis should have access to evidence-based approaches to care, we published *How to Stay Active and Relieve Your Pain* as a self-help manual in 2007.

Antoine was active in the Ontario and Canadian Physiotherapy Associations, serving terms as president for both associations. He was on the Board of Physiotherapy Canada, and a reviewer for 10 journals and research/grant funding agencies. An early patron of the Physiotherapy Foundation of Canada, he served on its scientific awards committee as chairman. He was also actively involved with the College of Physiotherapists of Ontario.

In spite of commitments to his work, time with family was sacrosanct. Weekends and holidays were spent at the cottage in northern Ontario, where he enjoyed cross-country skiing, sailing and golf, and visits from children and grandchildren. When he retired in 2002, the "cottage" became a beautiful home on the shores of Grass Lake. Antoine and Gesine lived there until 2005, when a move to Parksville, B.C., meant a gentler climate and proximity to their children. He remained connected with former colleagues and friends, consulted and continued to write. Antoine's contributions to his profession and to the rheumatology community will long be remembered.

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