

'As a Mentor, Your Expectation Should Be that Your Mentees in Their Career Will Accomplish More than You Have'

An Interview with Peter A. Banks, MD, Director, Center for Pancreatic Disease, Brigham and Women's Hospital, Boston, Mass., USA

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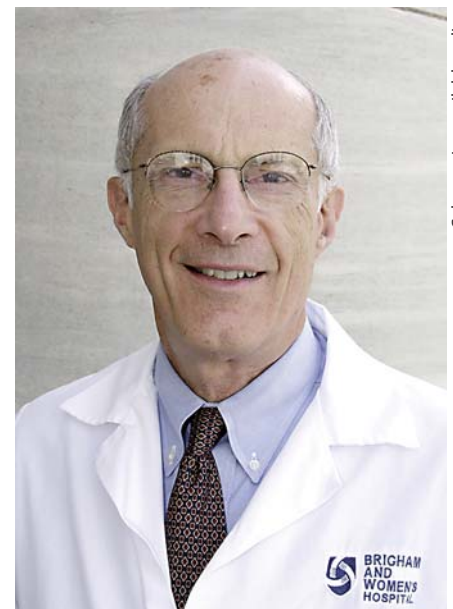
Abstract

Dr. Peter Banks has made an outstanding contribution to the understanding of pancreatic diseases. His exceptional achievements in the field of pancreatitis were seminal for the characterization of the pathogenesis of pancreatic diseases as well as its diagnosis and therapy. In this interview, Dr. Banks shares with *Pancreatology* his experience as a pancreatic researcher.

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M.F.-Z.: What initiated you to work in pancreas research in the first place?

P.A.B.: I was fortunate to work closely with Dr. Henry Janowitz and Dr. David Dreiling during my GI fellowship at Mt. Sinai Hospital in New York City from 1965 to 1967. On my first day of training Dr. Janowitz informed me that I would be writing 3 chapters with him for a textbook, one on acute pancreatitis, another on chronic pancreatitis and a third on pancreatic cancer. As I worked with Dr. Janowitz in writing these chapters and during my training, I developed a strong interest in learning more about the pancreas and completed several projects with Dr. Janowitz in clinical research. I also worked in Dr. Dreiling's pancreatic function laboratory and in his surgical research laboratory and completed several projects in pancreatic physiology. These included a publication in gastroenterology on the secretory capacity of the



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Dr. Peter A. Banks

stomach and pancreas in man and a publication in the *American Journal of Physiology* on the effect of acetazolamide on pancreatic function in the dog.

M.F.-Z.: You have pioneered pancreas research in so many directions. At the end of the day, what has given you most personal satisfaction?

P.A.B.: This question can be answered on several levels. First, regarding the research itself, the papers I wrote with Dr. Steven Gerzof on guided percutaneous aspiration has given me a great sense of satisfaction in making a contribution to the care of patients with necrotizing pancreatitis (*Gastroenterology*, 1987; *Pancreas*, 1990; *International Journal of Pancreatology*, 1995). Similarly, the work I did with Professor Badri Tandon and his associates in India on pancreatic disorders was very meaningful to me because I was contributing to an important research program involving diseases that afflicted many individuals in India and elsewhere (*Gastroenterology*, 1970, 1971, 1975; *International Journal of Pancreatology*, 1994). Other research that has given me great personal satisfaction includes studies that I have conducted when I was at St. Elizabeth's Hospital and more recently at Brigham and Women's Hospital on prognostic factors in acute pancreatitis and the ways to improve the treatment of acute pancreatitis.

Secondly, I have found it very rewarding to be able to interact with colleagues throughout the world sharing the results of research and learning from one another. It has been a wonderful experience to develop close friendships with many individuals. I value these friendships very much.

Finally, I have had the opportunity to be a mentor for many young men and women. My hope is that the individuals whom I have mentored will play an important role in patient care, research and teaching, and in time will serve as mentors for others.

M.F.-Z.: Based on your experience as a mentor, can you comment on the value of mentorship for the development of new investigators? What is the best advice you have received during your career? What is your advice to the young investigators that are beginning in the field of pancreas research?

P.A.B.: Mentorship is critical to the development of a new investigator both in terms of research and career. There is much that a new investigator needs to learn. This knowledge certainly covers the basic scientific approach including the idea to be tested, the collection and interpretation of data, the presentation of the data at national meetings, and the preparation and completion of manuscripts. This process takes a great commitment on the part of the investigator as well as on the part of the mentor. There are many important issues that confront a new investigator, such as the preparation of grant support, the evaluation of academic opportunities, as well as balancing of personal and professional life. A mentor should provide opportunities for the mentee to speak at meetings and to

participate actively in national and international associations. I would encourage every young investigator to seek out one, and possibly more than one mentor will be available, will be dedicated to the success of the mentee, will take pride in the accomplishments of the mentee, will be honest and demanding with respect to excellence and will inspire the mentee one day to become a mentor to others.

In terms of the best advice I received, I can think of several important statements that would fit 'best advice'. First, always be honest with others. Integrity matters. Second, acknowledge and give credit to colleagues for their accomplishments and insights. Third, place a high value on all members of your team and make sure that the lines of communication are always open. Finally, take great pride in the accomplishments of those whom you mentor. Your goal is to make available to your mentees your accumulated knowledge and insights. Your expectation should be that your mentees in their career will accomplish more than you have. Your best day should be when your mentee gives the lecture that you have always given, publishes a paper that exceeds your own scientific contributions, or takes his or her place in a leadership role.

Regarding advice to young investigators, I would suggest they should stay focused and not be distracted by the desire to 'do everything'. Research takes time to conceptualize, complete, and prepare for presentation and publication. There are no projects that can be done quickly. There is a danger in taking on too many research challenges and not finishing them. Finally, always strive to do research that leads to the improvement of patient care.

M.F.-Z.: What do you think are the big questions to be answered in pancreatology?

P.A.B.: There is so much work that needs to be done in the field of pancreatology. For this reason, this is a great time for individuals to engage in either clinical or basic research. Among the many clinical problems that need to be solved are: (1) the prevention and treatment of organ failure in acute pancreatitis; (2) better understanding and treatment of pain in chronic pancreatitis; (3) better understanding of the molecular biology of pancreatic cancer that will lead to earlier diagnosis and improved treatment.

M.F.-Z.: What do you think is the major need that a journal like *Pancreatology* should meet?

P.A.B.: *Pancreatology* should publish articles that help us understand the pathophysiology of pancreatic disease, as well as papers that help us diagnose and treat pancreatic disease, and review articles and editorials that inspire us to remain engaged in the quest for knowledge that will help patients. I believe the journal is doing a very good job in all of these areas.