



Obituary

Dr Lars Sullivan, MD, PhD

The whole international community of health workers dealing with spinal cord injured, as well as friends and patients, suffered a great loss on March 24, 1996 when Lars Sullivan quietly but suddenly and unexpectedly died. He suffered a major coronary infarction whilst resting in his easy-chair.

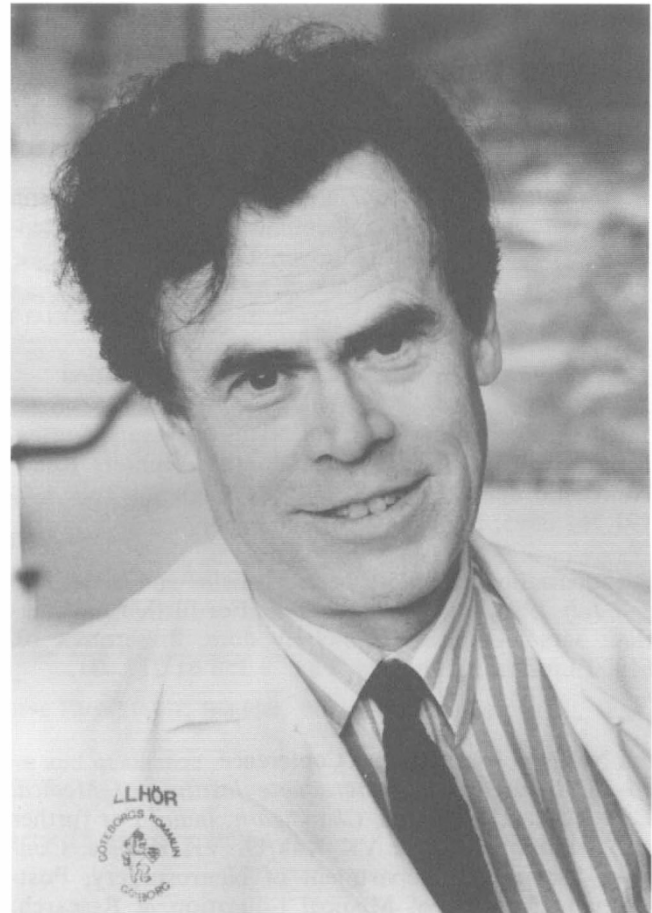
Lars Sullivan was a pioneer in the treatment and rehabilitation of spinal cord injured in Scandinavia. He was convinced that acute treatment and rehabilitation should take place in a comprehensive spinal unit according to the original ideas of Sir Ludwig Guttman. In Gothenburg he put his ideas into practice when he opened the first, and still the only, Scandinavian comprehensive spinal unit at Sahlgrenska Hospital in 1983. With Lars as head and inspirator this unit has functioned as a model for all other attempts to modernize and improve the care of spinal cord injured people in the Nordic countries.

Lars was born on May 1, 1934. In 1962 he graduated from the University of Uppsala. He started post-graduate training in neuro-surgery, orthopedics and rehabilitation mainly at the Sahlgrenska Hospital. Very early on he was engaged in research concerning muscle metabolism and energy expenditure problems. In 1976 he defended his PhD thesis title: "Metabolic and Physiologic Effects on Training in Hyperplastic Obesity". Ever since he has devoted his scientific interests to problems related to energy metabolism. He has left more than 200 publications mainly in this field, five PhD theses have been completed from his group and five more were under preparation. In 1977 Lars Sullivan was appointed Assistant Professor of Medical Rehabilitation at the University of Gothenburg.

Lars Sullivan was a long time member of IMSOP. He has served six years as a Council member of the Society, and in New Delhi last year he was elected for another term as representative of the Editorial Board of "Paraplegia". He was now Assistant Editor of our journal after many years as a member of the Editorial Board. He was a member of the Scientific Committee of the Society and was a member of the Organizing Committee of the 1986 Silver Jubilee meeting of IMSOP in Oslo.

During the 1980s there were some attempts to create a Scandinavian Society like the International IMSOP. Lars Sullivan fathered The Scandinavian Medical Society of Paraplegia in a meeting in Mariehamn, Åland 1987 and was elected the first President of this Society. Later he was reelected twice (1989 and 1991). Under his leadership the Society has grown to a considerable 400 members with biannual scientific meetings. Lars hosted the first SMSOP scientific meeting in Gothenburg in 1989.

Lars Sullivan was a brilliant teacher and inspirator. His work was highly appreciated by his patients and their organisations. He wrote articles in the newspapers, he appeared on television and he tried to persuade health politicians to organize the care for spinal cord injured people in the way that he always thought was the best. His



ideas about the comprehensive spinal unit were widely accepted, but in the last year of his life he met with ignorance and lack of knowledge within his own hospital. This fact brought him unnecessary and unexpected profound disappointment.

In public, Lars Sullivan was pleasant and perhaps a bit shy. He had a great sense of humour, and among friends his recitals of poems and stories were highly appreciated. He was a connoisseur of Swedish poetry and American literature. He was the originator of many precise and witty descriptions which for years to come will be quoted by those who were happy to know him well.

Lars was survived by four children from two marriages. His second wife, Marianne, was not only his better half but also a close co-worker in many scientific matters. Our best thoughts are conveyed to her when we all feel the immense emptiness left by the death of her husband and our friend.

Ragnar Stien MD