Dr. Michael R. Mardiney, asthma and allergy specialist

By Jacques Kelly
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Dr. Michael Ralph Mardiney Jr., an allergist and asthma specialist who founded immunology centers throughout Baltimore, died of heart disease March 28 at his Ruxton home. He was 80.

He oversaw the growth of the Mardiney Asthma, Allergy and Immunology Centers into a group of eight medical offices.

"He was a scientist and biologist at heart. He trained under some brilliant physicians," said his son, Dr. Michael Mardiney III, a physician who joined his father in his practice and lives in Mays Chapel. "I knew I wanted to work with him when I was 10. He loved his field. He picked the phone up 24 hours a day. He cared about his patients and would take on patients that other doctors had brushed off."

Born in Brooklyn, N.Y., and raised in the Park Slope neighborhood there, he was the son of Michael R. Mardiney Sr., a Syrian-born court reporter for the U.S. District Court in Manhattan. His mother was the former Marianna Carotenuto, a homemaker. He was a 1952 graduate of the old Brooklyn Preparatory School.

"My father was inspired to become a doctor by his uncle, Dr. Ralph Carotenuto, who was a psychiatrist. They had a close relationship," said Megan Mardiney, who lives in Brooklyn.

Dr. Mardiney earned a bachelor’s degree from Hamilton College then earned a medical degree from Seton Hall College of Medicine and Dentistry in 1960.

"He was intelligent, knowledgeable and well-read," said Dr. Howard B. Kern of Sussex County, N.J., a retired physician and medical school classmate of Dr. Mardiney’s.

Before moving to Baltimore in 1968, Dr. Mardiney studied internal medicine at the State University of New York’s Downstate Medical Center in Kings County Hospital Center. He also trained at Baylor University Medical Center in Dallas.

He became a medical and immunopathology researcher in the department of experimental pathology at Scripps Clinic and Research Foundation in La Jolla, Calif. Family members said he worked in the fields of immune disease and immunopathology.

"He treated his patients individually, and he never gave up on them," said another son, Dr. Matthew Mardiney, who lives in Lutherville and has practices there and in Bel Air. "His philosophy was that everyone can get better. Most of the time, he was successful. He looked at things from different angles."

He then joined the National Cancer Institute in Bethesda and did research on human lymphocyte and cancer immunology. In 1967, he was appointed head of a section at the Baltimore Cancer Research Center of the National Cancer Institute. The Baltimore center was located in the U.S. Public Health Service Hospital at Wyman Park.

His son Michael said Dr. Mardiney worked to develop a cancer vaccine.

"As section head, he gathered a group of bright, young, outstanding investigators to work with him, who at that time and even today are contributing significantly," he said.
In 1977, Dr. Mardiney went into private practice and opened an office in Howard County. He later expanded his practice to Padonia, Glen Burnie, Overlea, Reisterstown, Westminster, Bowie and Shrewsbury, Pa. He did not retire and saw patients until last week. Every other week, he worked six days a week.

"My father was a passionate physician and was available to his patients 24 hours a day," his daughter said. "When he first started his practice, he would set the office phone to ring at his home after office hours. He was always interested in what his patients were doing. ... His excitement was infectious."

Adept with computers and technology, Dr. Mardiney worked to link medical records digitally. Family members said he was always on the search for a better method of capturing information.

Dr. Mardiney enjoyed gardening and caring for trees on his Bellona Avenue property. He also maintained a large rose garden.

Services will be held at 11 a.m. Saturday at the Ruck Towson Funeral Home, 1050 York Road.

In addition to his sons and daughter, Dr. Mardiney is survived by his wife of 14 years, Karen Mardiney; another son, Brian P. Mardiney of Timonium; another daughter, Amanda E. Mardiney of Washington, D.C; a sister, Phyllis T. McKeen of Baltimore; and six grandchildren. His 1960 marriage to Maryann Flaherty Mardiney ended in divorce. His wife Eleanor Mardiney died in 1997.

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