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ANNE AGUR: VITA ET MEMORIA PROFESSORIS ANATOMIAE

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Professor Anne Agur passed on January 26, 2026, due to the complications arising from her struggles with a rare cancer spanning over two and half years.

Anne Maria Reet Agur (née Vilde) was born on November 10, 1953, in Toronto; she was predeceased by her parents, Raimond and Valentina Vilde (née Kärner). Anne grew up on Castlefield Avenue in Toronto, attending Allenby Public School, later Glenview Senior Public School and then North Toronto Collegiate Institute. At North Toronto, she was a top student and participated in many sports as well as the music program. Even though she was musically challenged, she played the cello in the North Toronto Collegiate Institute orchestra under Mr. Ford. She also finished Grade 8 piano.

After completing high school, she continued her studies at the University of Toronto, earning a degree as an occupational therapist in 1976. During her last years in Occupational Therapy, Anne was mentored by her favourite professor, Miss Rita Harland, who convinced her to pursue studies in Anatomy. Anne completed her Master in Anatomy under the direction of Dr. Ian Taylor in 1978. Owing to her strong clinical background and academic training in anatomy, she was appointed as a lecturer in the Department of Anatomy at the University of Toronto shortly after completing her studies. Later, she became an Assistant Professor and Associate Professor. In 2001, Anne Agur defended her PhD thesis at the University of Toronto entitled *Architecture of the Human Soleus Muscle: Three-Dimensional Computer Modeling of Cadaveric Muscle and Ultrasonographic Documentation In Vivo* [1]. Her PhD supervisor was Dr. Nancy McKee. Following this, she was soon promoted to Full and Tenured Professor with a primary appointment in the Division of Anatomy, Department of Surgery. She subsequently garnered cross appointments and affiliations with multiple other departments and institutes, including the School of Graduate Studies at

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the University of Toronto, the Institute of Medical Science, the Wilson Center, the Rehabilitation Sciences Sector at Temerty Faculty of Medicine, the Faculty of Dentistry, and the Division of Biomedical Communications at the Institute of Communications and Culture at the University of Toronto at Mississauga.

As an internationally recognized professor of anatomy, Anne Agur made a significant contribution over 46 years to the teaching and scholarly development of clinical anatomy, histology, neuroanatomy, and embryology. Her research focused particularly on the anatomy of the head and neck, the musculoskeletal system, and neuroanatomy. She has published more than 150 peer-reviewed scientific articles. The central aim of her life's work was to integrate anatomy with clinical medicine, providing a solid foundation for the application of anatomical knowledge in radiology, surgery, and pain management. Through her long-standing and dedicated teaching career, she profoundly influenced the education of medical and dental students in North America and around the world.

She received numerous awards in recognition of her outstanding contributions to teaching and research and was a highly respected educator and mentor. For her, mentorship was a reciprocal journey – everyone is always someone else's mentor. She emphasized that the goal of education cannot be limited to the mechanical transfer of knowledge alone; equally important are the posing of guiding questions, the opening of diverse perspectives, and the support of students throughout the learning process. Mentorship does not end with the defense of a thesis; it continues in every conversation, every working meeting, and every chance discussion in conference corridors where knowledge and experience are shared. She was a beloved teacher and mentor to hundreds, maybe even thousands of students in the medical field. In her later years, she worked with many medical residents who appreciated her passion and depth of knowledge in anatomy

Under the mentorship of Dr. Keith Moore, Anne became the co-author and later editor of *Grant's Atlas of Anatomy*, 9th through 16th edition starting in 1991, later collaborating with Dr. Arthur Dalley (Vanderbilt University, USA). Their collaboration continued through *Essential Clinical Anatomy*, and *Clinically Oriented Anatomy*. These publications emphasize the description of anatomical structures and their clinical relevance, thereby fostering effective collaboration between anatomists and clinicians. These atlas textbooks rank among the most widely used anatomy textbooks in the world and are extensively utilized in both medical and dental education. Her latest challenge was the work with Dr. Carol Scott-Conner on a chapter in the *Fischer's Mastery of*

Surgery (8th Edition). This undertaking provided her with a new challenge in exploring the surgical field.

Anne has been widely recognized at the University of Toronto for her outstanding contributions to teaching, research, and academic collaboration. She regarded the Henry Gray Distinguished Educator Award, which she received in 2019 as her most treasured honor. This is the highest education award for human anatomy education in the anatomical sciences as broadly defined – including gross anatomy, embryology, histology, and neuroanatomy – at



Photo 1. Colleagues at Dr. Keith Moore's 80th jubilee. Anne Agur, Arthur Dalley and Keith Moor.



Photo 2. At the presentation of the atlas textbook with Dr. Arthur Dalley.

the medical/dental, graduate or undergraduate level of teaching. This recognition affirmed her belief that anatomy is a discipline that demands rigor, imagination, and deep humanity.

Anne Agur was also actively involved in numerous professional societies and associations, most notably anatomical organizations such as the American Association for Anatomy (AAA) and the International Federation of Anatomical Associations (IFAA). She was also a member of the American Association of Clinical Anatomists (AACA) and served as its president from 2011 to 2013, played major roles on the Executive Committee and Council, and was co-editor of the *Clinical Anatomy* journal from 2003–2009. The Honored Member Award of the American Association of Clinical Anatomists was presented to her at the 35th Annual Meeting, July 8–12, 2018, in Atlanta, Georgia, for her distinguished career in and dedicated enthusiasm for clinically applied anatomy, particularly in recognition of her scholarship, mentoring of research, and education of students around the world.

Professor Agur also maintained close ties with the Department of Anatomy at the University of Tartu to which she donated valuable atlas textbooks. Several colleagues had the opportunity to visit the Department of Anatomy at the University of Toronto, gaining insight into its teaching and laboratory work. She herself visited the Department of Anatomy at the University of Tartu on multiple occasions. She served twice as an external opponent for PhD theses addressing the anatomy of the shoulder joint, related injuries, and the development of surgically adapted treatment techniques. On April 25, 2018, Elle Põldoja defended her doctoral dissertation

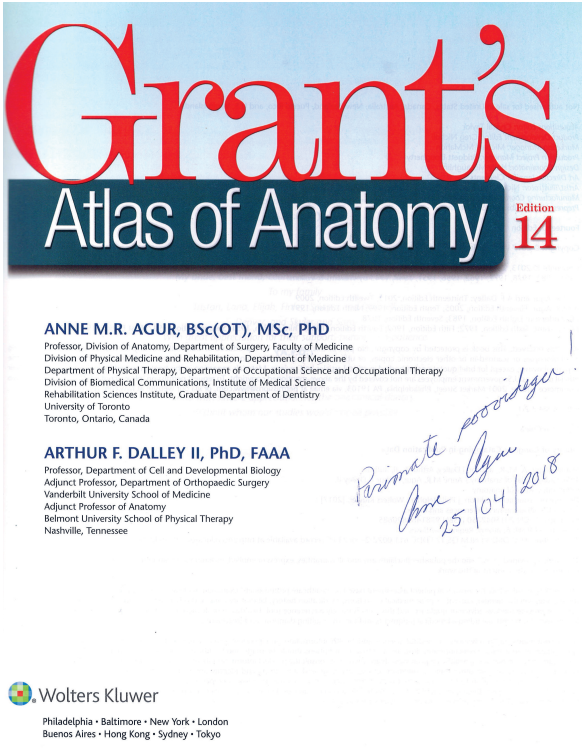


Photo 3. Title page of Grant's Atlas of Anatomy (14th edition).



Photo 4. Colleagues Anne Agur and Elle Põldoja after the successful reviewing and defence of Elle Põldoja's doctoral thesis.



Photo 5. Anne Agur (with flowers) after the lecture at Linkberg Lecture Room with colleagues from the University of Tartu.

entitled *Structure and blood supply of the superior part of the shoulder joint capsule* with Professor Anne Agur serving as the official opponent [2]. As part of this visit, Professor Anne Agur delivered a lecture in the Linkberg Auditorium of Tartu University Hospital on the subject of *Peripheral sensory nerve blocks and radiofrequency ablation: An alternative pain management strategy*. Two years later, on April 2, 2020, Madis Rahu defended his PhD thesis entitled *Structure and blood supply of the posterosuperior part of the shoulder joint capsule with implementation of surgical treatment after anterior traumatic dislocation*, with Professor Anne Agur also serving as the opponent [3]. The defence did not take place on site at the University of Tartu but was conducted via Zoom due the COVID-19 pandemic.

Beyond her professional career, she made an active contribution in Toronto to the preservation of Estonian culture and identity. She served on the boards of Tartu College and the Estonian Museum Abroad (VEMU), was a member of *Filiae Patriae*, and in her youth led the Girl Guides group *Rajaleidjad*.

Professor Anne Agur retired on June 30, 2025, with over 46 years of service at the University of Toronto and at which time she was conferred the title of Professor Emerita.



Photo 6. With colleagues and students at the retirement ceremony at the University of Toronto in 2025 (Anne Agur at front centre).

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