

Interview

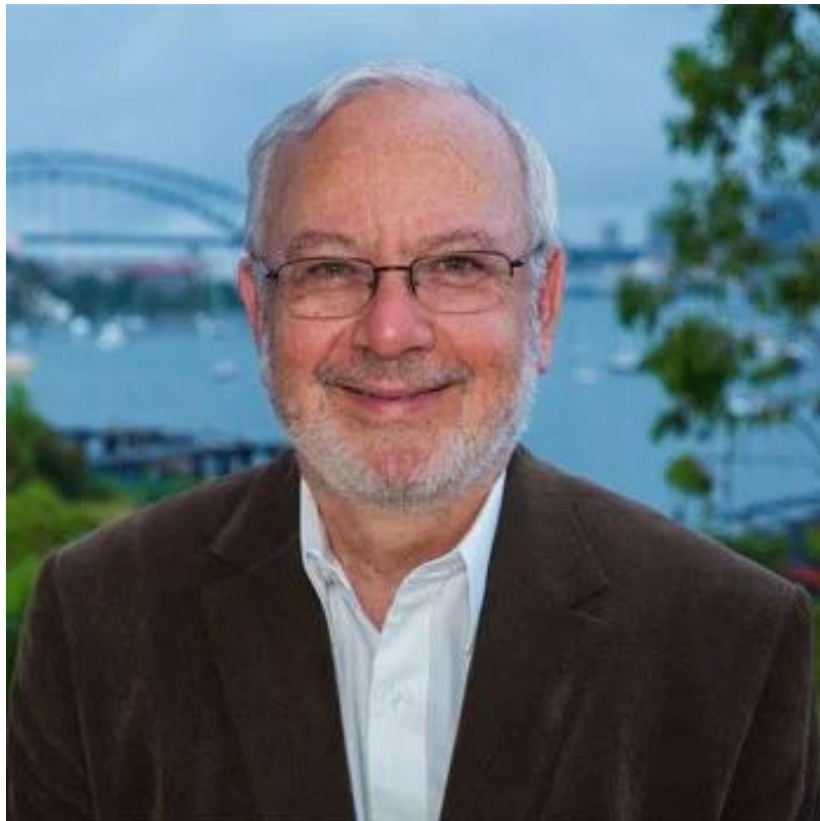
## An Interview with Prof. Dr. Roy G. Beran

*OBM Geriatrics* Editorial Office

LIDSEN Publishing Inc., 2000 Auburn Drive, One Chagrin Highlands, Suite 200, Beachwood, OH, USA;  
E-Mail: [geriatrics@lidsen.com](mailto:geriatrics@lidsen.com)

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**Prof. Dr. Roy G. Beran**



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## **1. Could You Please Tell Us Your Scientific Background?**

My resume includes a very varied medical background that includes: leaving school at the age of 15 to complete 2 years in 1, as a private study student, and entering medical school at the time of my 17th birthday; working as a nurse while undertaking undergraduate medical training and achieving the MBBS qualification; training as a physician upon completing undergraduate training; working as a family physician, while completing my specialist examinations, Fellowship of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians (FRACP), part 1; subsequently completing the examinations for Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP), specialist recognition in general practice; before returning to the hospital environment to complete my training as a neurologist (FRACP). I then returned to my alma mater, the University of NSW, in Sydney Australia, to complete the MD doctorate in neuroepidemiology; while concurrently training in education (completing the Grad Dip Further Ed'n & Grad Dip Tertiary Ed'n); following which I was awarded the Fellowship of the Australian Faculty of Public Health Medicine (FAFPHM). As a neurologist, I collaborated with a colleague, establishing the sleep laboratory at St Luke's Hospital, in Sydney, while working as a Visiting Medical Officer (VMO) at a number of public teaching hospitals, and was recognised as a sleep physician, following further supervised training. I also joined the Royal Australian Navy Reserve, as an Officer, and ultimately was retired with the rank of Commander. At the same time, I studied law and was awarded the Bachelor of Legal Studies (B Leg S) from Macquarie University, an accepted full law degree allowing practice as a lawyer, but I did not undertake College of Law training, following which I completed a Master of Health Law (MHL) degree from Sydney University. Throughout this time, I worked as a neurologist in private practice and pioneered the undertaking of clinical research and drug trialling in private practice, having established a private company, specifically designed for the purpose. I was a founding Fellow of the Australasian College of Legal Medicine (ACLM), achieving the position of its Presidency, and also joined the World Association for Medical Law (WAML), also achieving the position of President. More recently, I was appointed as the foundation Vice President of the newly established Australian Magnetic Resonance Imaging Association (AMRIA). In all these roles, my research has been focused on clinical medicine, being acutely aware of that which seemed unusual and questioning everything that I had been taught, to see if there were alternative answers to established facts.

## **2. What Is Your Main Research Area? What Got You Interested in This Research in the First Place?**

I started my research focusing on epilepsy and am grateful to Dr Graham Schapel for directing my initial research into that area. As a result, my doctorate was designed to re-evaluate the epidemiology of Epilepsy in Sydney, Australia. Dr Schapel, who was a clinical pharmacologist at the time and subsequently became a fully qualified neurologist, also introduced me to clinical pharmacology and clinical drug trialling in private practice, which, at the time, was an anathema to mainstream research. This led to my questioning everything, which in turn led to numerous papers that challenge long-held opinions and attitudes.

### **3. Could You Please Briefly Share Your Career Development Story with Us? And What Impressed You Most in Your Research Life?**

Most of the response, to this question, has already been provided in my responses to earlier questions. Perhaps the most important lesson which I learnt was that it is not always inappropriate to be “a round peg in a square hole” as it allows consideration of that which is outside the box and, through that, has led to some “world first” observations which challenge widely held concepts which may not always be the correct response to long held views.

### **4. Where Do You Get the Latest News about Your Research Area or Where Do You Take Inspiration From?**

My greatest inspiration has come from my patients and from teaching, when students and young doctors ask those questions that older and wiser doctors have learnt that they should not ask because it amplifies their lack of knowledge. To respond, to such questions, often dictates seeking answers that satisfy those asking the questions and, through that, motivates the need to seriously question that which has gone before. Those patients who present with complaints that “come from left field”, namely, for which there is no immediate answer, direct attention to seek an acceptable answer and, through that, open door that was shut till that time.

### **5. Considering the Progress in Your Research Area, Could You Please Share with Us Some Hot Topics or Cutting-Edge Technologies in Your Research Field?**

One of the most interesting new enlightenments has been the role of Obstructive Sleep Apnoea in the presentation of stroke mimics. Another has been the benefit of starting very early treatment for Parkinson’s disease, at the very first signs of clinical evidence, based on the tell-tale hallmark features, despite many questioning the wisdom thereof. Another is perpetuating the use of antiseizure medication blood level determination when treating status epilepticus or cluster seizures, when others simply give bolus therapy without considering treating to a level, rather than a dosage, thereby denying the individuality or idiosyncrasy of patients.

### **6. Do You Also Offer Training and/or Further Education in Your Area?**

I most definitely do offer teaching and training, as I always learn more when I teach than when I sign up as a student, for all the reasons set out above. One of the problems, and one that I always acknowledge, is that my teachings may not accord with widely accepted dogma and, to that end, I always say to my ‘students’, be they under-graduates or post-graduates, that one should never accept that which the ‘grey haired professor’ espouses, without a healthy dose of skepticism and always question whatever is taught to satisfy one’s own curiosity. In addition to teaching, I also never pass up the opportunity to attend learning experiences, provided by colleagues, because one never knows what will be taught nor what one will learn, and I fully accept the maxim, “a day in which one has not learnt something new is a wasted day”.

**7. Is There a Book You've Read that You'd Recommend Universally (i.e., to Everyone You Meet)?**

With 17 books under my belt, I usually show absolute arrogance and recommend my own publications, which outline my heretical views.

**8. What Valuable Suggestions or Experiences Would You Like to Share with Young Scholars Regarding How to Be a Professional Researcher?**

My answers to this question are set out in my answers to the above questions. In brief, question everything; be aware of that which does not comply with accepted dogma; never accept anything just because someone who claims to be old and wiser has proffered the answer. Always question what you have done and why.