Dear Colleagues:

I am saddened to tell you that Dr. Raymond LeBlanc passed away on 10 July at the age of 84 years.

Ray was a wonderful, kind, and generous person with big heart. He was known and loved by so many people, here in Halifax, and across the world. He made numerous contributions in patient care, education, health care delivery and research. Ray was a tenacious builder, whether it be clinical or research teams, infrastructure, models of innovative collaborative eye care or advocacy. He went about his business in the most tireless and committed manner but always maintained a respectful and human quality. He had an insatiable desire to do good, and this will be his legacy.

He was a proud Acadian, born in Moncton, New Brunswick in 1939. He went to medical school at the University of Ottawa and did his ophthalmology residency at the Cleveland Clinic. He completed his glaucoma fellowship at the University of Washington in St Louis under Bernard Becker.

After being on faculty at McGill University and the University of Sherbrooke, he became Head of the Department of Ophthalmology at Dalhousie University in 1979. He served in this role until 2003. During his headship, he built the Eye Care Centre, a new facility for integrated vision care and research, helped create a multidisciplinary basic science facility for retina research and more than doubled the clinical and research faculty. He was coaxed out of retirement in 2008 to become Vice-President of Research at Capital Health, the clinical affiliation of Dalhousie University. This initial two-year position stretched out to seven years as he set out again to create multi-disciplinary research teams that had improved patient care as the core objective.
Ray was a dedicated and long-time member of the GRS. He served as Secretary from 1998 to 2003, and as Treasurer from 2004 to 2012. He was instrumental in strengthening our society and increasing the structure and quality of our meetings. For his contributions, he was made an Honorary Member. Among his other honours were the Order of Canada in 2005 and the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Canadian Ophthalmological Society in 2014. He received honorary degrees from the Université de Moncton and Dalhousie University.

I was fortunate to be part of Ray’s capacity building drive. He invited me to Dalhousie to ‘have a look’ after my fellowship and recruited me on a shoestring. What the department lacked at that time in research resources and infrastructure was more than made up by his vision, drive, and warm heart. I knew he always had my back, as he did for all his faculty. The department has come a long way since, thanks to him. I know that I speak for my colleagues both here and elsewhere by saying that Ray was a big man with limitless enthusiasm. He filled every space with his curiosity, optimism, and genuine love of people. He wanted to know about everyone and everything.

Ray was a constant and it is difficult to imagine he has gone. While he will be deeply missed, his memory will live on as he has touched the lives of so many.

Balwantray Chauhan, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada