
Arnold Berstad

OBITUARIES

JØRGEN VALEUR

TRYGVE HAUSKEN

JAN GUNNAR HATLEBAKK

GÜLEN ARSLAN LIED

GEIR FOLVIK

KRISTINE LILLESTØL GUNNAR NYSÆTER

TØRE MIDTVEDT

INGVARD WILHELMOSEN

LARS BIRGER NESJE

ODD HELGE GILJA



Arnold Berstad died on New Year's Eve 2020. Norway has lost one of its leading gastroenterologists – and perhaps the most curious, innovative and inspiring professional in the field.

Arnold was born in Stryn in 1940, and grew up on a farm as the eldest of seven siblings. He attained a cand.med. at the University of Oslo in 1965, and started his academic career at Ullevål Hospital's IX Department in 1968. In 1971, he defended his thesis on the digestive enzyme pepsin – one of the most cited works in gastroenterology at the time.

In 1972, Arnold began his clinical training at Lovisenberg Diaconal Hospital, where he would eventually become a senior consultant and a specialist in internal medicine and digestive diseases. During his time at Lovisenberg, he established an active research community that produced a total of six doctoral degrees.

In 1987, he was a guest researcher at the University of Alabama in Birmingham, USA, under the Nobel Prize-nominated professor Basil I. Hirschowitz (1925–2013). Arnold's friendship and professional sparring with Hirschowitz were lifelong. That same year, he was 'called to serve' as head of the gastro unit at Haukeland University Hospital's Medical Department, and professor at the University of Bergen. The years that followed saw a steady flow of published dissertations on functional dyspepsia, *Helicobacter pylori*, gastroesophageal reflux disease and food hypersensitivity. Arnold's ability to stimulate scientific curiosity and to involve new contributors made Bergen an international focal point in gastrointestinal research. He was involved in creating national centres of excellence in gastroenterological ultrasonography and functional gastrointestinal diseases, and was instrumental in the establishment of the nutrition study programme at the University of Bergen.

When Arnold became professor emeritus in 2010, he returned to Lovisenberg, where he helped develop the Unger-Vetlesens Institutt research unit. He was extremely popular with the patients, whom he followed up far beyond the norm.

Arnold has over 400 registered publications in PubMed. He has supervised 35 doctoral candidates – an unofficial Norwegian record among clinical researchers. For the younger members of 'Arnold's group', his international reputation represented a gateway to the best research communities in all corners of the world. In 2002, Arnold received the Scandinavian Journal of

Gastroenterology's honorary award, and this was followed by a period in the role of editor. He was also given the Dr Falch Award for Outstanding Research Leadership that year. Arnold was a member of the European Gastro Club in Erlangen, Germany, the American Gastroenterology Association, and an honorary member of the Norwegian Gastroenterological Association.

As a researcher, Arnold was known for his originality, ingenuity and creativity. His commitment to the field was almost all-encompassing, and his enthusiasm contagious. His door was always open. He always found the good in a situation and never said a bad word about anyone: qualities that made him an inspiring and highly esteemed mentor. We once asked Arnold what his driving force was. 'I live and breathe every day in the notion that a major breakthrough is just around the corner,' was his response.

Arnold had a strong belief in what he was doing, and his courage and scientific boldness bore fruit in abundance. Several of his research students are now clinical research leaders, and are committed to working according to Arnold's ideals. Our warmest thoughts go to his wife Tove, sons Ketil, Audun and Terje, and everyone else in his large family.

Publisert: 22. February 2021. Tidsskr Nor Legeforen. DOI: 10.4045/tidsskr.21.0009
Copyright: © Tidsskriftet 2026 Downloaded from tidsskriftet.no 3 July 2026.