Kypros Nicolaides was born in 1953 in Paphos, Cyprus. He studied Medicine at King’s College School of Medicine and Dentistry in London and soon after graduation joined the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology in 1980 doing research with Professor Stuart Campbell and Dr. Charles Rodeck as his first assistant and working mainly on fetoscopic techniques and procedures. He was well-known for his manual dexterity at procedures and the Rodeck-Nicolaides team soon produced some very important papers on the use of fetoscopy in the management of a wide range of conditions such Rhesus iso-immunization, fetal hydrops and intrauterine growth restriction and blood and tissue sampling in the diagnosis of single gene defects.

After the departure of Professor Charles Rodeck, Nicolaides became director of the Harris Birthright Research Centre for Fetal Medicine, the first fetal medicine unit in the United Kingdom. He began a programme of research and teaching which made King’s College Hospital an important center of fetal medicine activities for thousands of visiting doctors. (The Harris Birthright Centre, located at King’s College Hospital, was set up in 1984 through the generosity of Sir Philip Harris and the charity organisation Birthright. It has developed into a major research and clinical unit for fetal diagnosis and therapy. The research of the centre is not financed by the National Health Service but is mainly dependent on donations).

Nicolaides discarded the fetoscope and pursued all blood sampling procedures by taking blood from the placental cord insertion, popularising the term “cordocentesis”. The technique was initially pioneered in France in 1983 by Fernand Daffos, but Nicolaides developed the single operator method and soon investigated many aspect of fetal physiology and pathophysiology such as fetal blood gases and acid-base status; correlations between fetal blood gases and Doppler; fetal metabolism, fetal endocrinology, fetal immunology, fetal hematolgy and fetal biochemistry in diabetic pregnancies. In 1992 Kypros teamed up with Yves Ville, a visiting doctor from France, to produce the first paper on endoscopic laser therapy for severe twin-twin transfusion syndrome.

His research in Prenatal Diagnosis covers a wide span of topics extending into the many realms of prenatal ultrasonography, cytogenetic studies and doppler velocimetry. Many of the Research Fellows that came through his department learned from him tremendously and soon had become well-known names on their own. The ‘lemon’ and ‘banana’ signs in spina bifida which he described in 1986 are simple and yet the most important ultrasonic signs in the detection of this condition. His studies on the relationship between fetal abnormalities and chromosome defects and other data on nuchal translucency for example remain the most significant data on these subjects. In 1992, Nicolaides began a series of studies on the measurement of nuchal translucency in the first trimester fetus, a project which he carried on for 8 years and which has transformed the way obstetrics is practised in many parts of the world. Kypros single-handedly organized a massive project with 20 district hospitals in the South of England visiting each Department personally and supervising the training of the sonographers in the measurement. He had unprecedentedly built in quality control by providing each sonographer with updates of the mean and standard deviations of his or her measurements! He subsequently expanded his screening studies to over 500 centres in 52 countries.

Professor Nicolaides is uncompromising in his pursuit for scientific truth and would not raise his brows at any political advancement. He has contributed to over 500 journal articles and more than 30 books and monographs. In 1996 he established the Fetal Medicine Foundation which runs regular courses with an international panel of speakers and delegates attending from all round the world. He has established a Diploma in Fetal Medicine which had become the most important certification in fetal medicine in Europe and in other countries. 200 candidates from 46 countries take the Fetal Medicine Foundation Diploma examinations each year. A formidable teacher he is admired by his students and colleagues for his intellectual abilities and manual dexterity. In 1999, he was conferred the Ian Donald Gold Medal from the International Society of Ultrasound in Obstetrics and Gynecology.