Tribute

Jay P. Sanford (1928–1996)

Jay P. Sanford, a past-president of the Infectious Diseases Society of America, died on 23 October 1996 at the age of 68.

Jay had a long and illustrious career as an investigator, teacher, clinician, and most of all, as a leader. His talent served as a cornerstone of two proud and distinguished institutions: The University of Texas Southwestern School of Medicine in Dallas, Texas, and the F. Edward Hebert School of Medicine of the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences in Bethesda, Maryland.

After completion of his formal education at The University of Michigan, the Peter Bent Brigham in Boston, and at Duke University Medical Center, Jay served 2 years in the Department of Experimental Surgery at the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research. The Walter Reed experience sparked his lifelong commitment to military medicine.

Jay arrived in Dallas in 1957 to join a small and gifted faculty who were starting a new medical school. Over his next 18 years, he served as chief of the Infectious Diseases Division, director of the Diagnostic Microbiology Laboratory, and vice-chairman of the Department of Medicine. Word of Jay’s teaching ability and the strength of the Infectious Diseases Division spread rapidly. Acceptance into the fellowship in Infectious Diseases became a highly competitive endeavor. To this day, each graduate of the fellowship, now a leader in his or her own right, recalls Dr. Sanford as a mentor and a surrogate father.

In 1970, Jay was asked to conduct Grand Rounds on the “new” antibiotics (e.g., amoxicillin). The result was a handout of 6–8 pages of practical tables on antimicrobial use. The Sanford Guide to Antimicrobial Therapy was born. The Guide is now in its 26th edition and has become an essential of medical practice worldwide.

Soon after his leadership skills were recognized in Dallas, he was sought after by national organizations. Jay was president of the American Federation for Clinical Research in 1968. He served as councillor, then secretary, and then president of the Infectious Diseases Society of America over the years from 1966 to 1979. He was awarded the Society’s Bristol Award in 1981 and a special citation in 1992.

It is not surprising that Jay’s interests and those of military medicine would nurture each other. He could not satisfy a thirst for seeing all of infectious diseases by staying in Dallas. The worldwide military establishment was perfect for the study and teaching of infectious diseases. After many years as a consultant to the military, Jay saw the promise of a military medical school that could take advantage of unique clinical venues, enhance a career in military medicine, and attenuate—or eliminate—the need for the periodic drafting of physicians. Along with Congressman Hebert, Jay brought the vision to a reality. In 1975, he became the first dean and, subsequently, president of the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences in Bethesda, Maryland. He held this position until 1990. Jay was a dean like no other: he lectured, took care of patients, recruited and organized students and faculty, and became a mentor to all. He camped with the students; he jumped out of airplanes with the students.

Jay’s vision is fulfilled. During his terms as dean and president, over 2000 physicians were added to the federal health system. The University has matured as a respected academic institution; there have been no physician drafts; and, increasingly, talented physicians commit to a career in military medicine.

Space constraints preclude a full enumeration of Jay Sanford’s contributions to medicine in the United States and around the world. A sampling must suffice. He held leadership positions at the National Library of Medicine, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Food and Drug Administration, the National Science Foundation, the Institute of Medicine, and the Association of American Medical Colleges. He served as chairman of the Accreditation Council on Graduate Medical Education and of the American Board of Internal Medicine.
Jay continued in military service as an Army reservist his entire life. At the time of his death, he held the rank of colonel and was assigned to an airborne special forces group. His parachuting expertise was demonstrated all over the world.

In 1992, the French government acknowledged his contributions to military medicine in France by making Jay the first American to receive the French armed services Medal of Honor.

Fifteen years ago, Jay learned he had an indolent lymphoma. With characteristic selfless concern, he continued a full commitment to teaching, advising, and writing, and to building the national infrastructure of medicine. Shortly before his death, Jay shared his joy at contributing to the professional lives of thousands of students, residents, fellows, and faculty. To various degrees, all the lives he touched came to cherish his curiosity for new knowledge, his striving for personal excellence, and his never-ending passion for medicine.

Jay is survived by his wife and life-partner Lorraine (Lorrie) and their five children: Jeb, Nancy, Sarah, Philip, and Cathy. The family has requested that memorial gifts be directed to either the Sanford Chair in Tropical Medicine at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences or the Jay P. Sanford Chair in Infectious Diseases at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical School in Dallas.

Though short of stature, all would agree we’ve lost a giant of infectious diseases. I suspect Jay remains busy leading and organizing the hereafter. Our orders are to “carry on.”

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