

# MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

## KENNETH L. MELMON

(1934 - 2002)

Kenneth L. Melmon, M.D., Professor of the Department of Medicine at Stanford University School of Medicine, died April 8, 2002. Dr. Melmon was 67 years old.

A native San Franciscan, Dr. Melmon received a B.A. from Stanford University and an M.D. degree from the UCSF School of Medicine in 1959. After a three-year appointment at the NIH, Dr. Melmon returned to the West Coast as Chief Resident in Medicine at the University of Washington. In 1965 he proceeded to his first faculty appointment as founder and Chief of the Division of Clinical Pharmacology at UCSF.

At that time, Clinical Pharmacology was in its infancy as a medical subspecialty, and there were few if any models for training programs in this field. Dr. Melmon's vision about what clinical pharmacology should be won him the 1966 Burroughs Wellcome Scholar Award, and with the funds provided by that award, he set out to build a Clinical Pharmacology program at UCSF that melded rigorous training in laboratory science with excellent bedside training in how to use medications more effectively and how to diagnose and treat problems that arise when they are misused. During his thirteen years at UCSF he trained hundreds of physicians and scientists in a program whose excellence was internationally recognized. Many of these trainees have gone on to head Clinical Pharmacology programs and academic departments at universities throughout the world.

Dr. Melmon's reputation as a superb physician and outstanding clinical teacher grew. He was a man with the ability to excite house staff and students about the relevance of scientific data to clinical medicine. Rather than being someone who simply recited his own personal experiences, he was a teacher who said to his trainees – more than 30 years before “evidence-based medicine” became fashionable in the clinical world – “never mind what my experience is, what do the DATA show?” Under his mentoring, house staff were trained to ask and answer tough questions and to be critical in their evaluation of clinical information.

In 1978 Kenneth Melmon accepted the Chair of the Department of Medicine at Stanford University. Widely acclaimed as a distinguished educator, scholar and author, scientist and clinician, his achievements in basic science were regarded highly enough for him to have been offered Chairs of leading basic pharmacology departments. His commitment to teaching and contributions to clinical medicine had made him sought after by multiple institutions seeking a world-class Chairman of Medicine. Moreover, he had shown that he was a builder – a no-nonsense administrator who instinctively knew the right programs to create and how to make programs and institutions flourish. He had been elected president of both the American Federation for Clinical Research and the American

Society for Clinical Investigation. He was soon to be elected a member of the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences. He had served as advisor to the FDA and the U.S. Congress in the area of medication use. Dr. Melmon was an innovator with extraordinary vision and a remarkable ability to bring people together.

When Ken Melmon arrived here as Chair of Medicine, he began systematically to address the many significant problems facing the department and medical school. He set in motion mechanisms to bring community physicians and university faculty together in jointly run programs; he carried out methodical and rigorous reviews of sub-specialty divisions within the Department to identify clinical and scientific strengths and weaknesses; and he proceeded quickly to address the problems uncovered by this process. He began a vigorous program of faculty recruitment – identifying outstanding young candidates and then marshaling the resources necessary to attract them here and assist their professional development. He created alliances with industry that supplemented the Stanford funds available to support faculty development. In addition, he provided the personal encouragement and support that young faculty need and seek from their leaders.

It is never easy to make important changes in the way an institution views itself, but Dr. Melmon did this – very skillfully – and his accomplishments gained him the great respect and admiration of his colleagues. During his Chairmanship of Medicine, Dr. Melmon was instrumental in setting the agenda for many of the good things that have occurred at Stanford Medical Center during the past 20 years. He built bridges between separate academic fields, helping to create an atmosphere within the medical school that led to recognition of the importance of incorporating the advances being made in the basic sciences into clinical medicine. It was Ken Melmon who had the vision, foresight, and judgment to first propose the establishment of a center for molecular and genetic medicine in which medical scientists and basic scientists would participate together in the creation of new knowledge. His model for what became the Beckman Center was a paradigm for similar centers at other schools of medicine.

In 1983 Dr. Melmon created the Albion Walter Hewlett Award to honor “the physician of care and skill who is committed to discovering and using biologic knowledge, wisdom and compassion to return patients to productive lives.” He wanted to recognize those clinicians who served as dynamic role models for future academicians and practitioners of scientific medicine. The awardees have included a distinguished list of Stanford faculty and community physicians.

Under Dr. Melmon’s leadership as Chairman of Medicine, town and gown worked together on common goals in clinical care. His dynamism and skill helped persuade strong basic science departments to join together to strengthen weaker basic science departments. Programs were set in place to make Stanford a center of excellence – not only for fundamental research in the biomedical sciences, but also for clinical medicine. Young faculty and older faculty alike had a sense of optimism about the future and about where we were going as an institution. Excellence in research, excellence in teaching, and excellence in

clinical care all seemed attainable. As Chair of the largest and most central department in the School of Medicine, Dr. Melmon had the key role in creating the extraordinary environment that helped to generate this optimism.

Dr. Melmon's innovation and his contributions to this institution – and more broadly to American medicine – continued in full force after he had retired as Chairman of Medicine. He served as Associate Dean and Director of Postgraduate Medical Education and as Chair of the Medical School Faculty Senate. He continued to be a key advisor to the FDA and to work on important projects of the Institute of Medicine. He received numerous honors and awards, served on the editorial boards of scientific journals, and was the author or coauthor of over 300 publications including monographs, chapters in textbooks, original journal articles, and four editions of his own textbook, "Melmon and Morelli's Clinical Pharmacology." To Ken Melmon, excellence in clinical care required better medical education for practicing physicians. In 1995, during what were still the early days of Internet use, he conceived of a way to swiftly deliver relevant, accurate, and current medical information to physicians through the Internet. Thus the SKOLAR medical information system was born – and then painstakingly developed by a team that he put together and led. His goal was to make medical information so available to practicing physicians that they too could say, "never mind what my personal experience is, what do the data show?"

Ken Melmon was at the same time thoughtful and bold. He was a man with an absolutely wonderful sense of humor and a warm – sometimes almost mischievous – twinkle in his eye. Ken was a person with a continuous flow of ideas of his own, who knew how to encourage the development of ideas by others. He was an intense person who was gentle and generous in his personal interactions. Ken was someone whose life was filled to the brim with innovation and accomplishment, but who still wanted to do more. He was a man who gave everything he had to the institutions he cared about, but who also had time, energy, and concern for the people he cared about. His family and his many friends and colleagues miss him dearly.

Stanley Cohen , Chair  
Terrence Blaschke  
Halstead Holman