

In memoriam: Robert H Knopp

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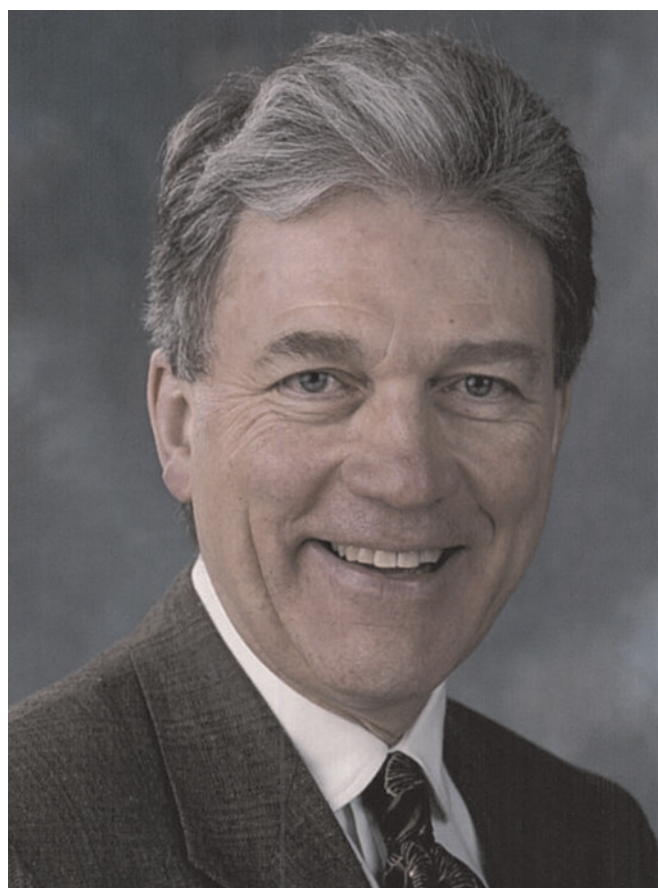
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On May 30, 2010, Dr Robert H Knopp, a productive researcher, compassionate physician, devoted teacher and dedicated family man died suddenly at age 72 from complications of acute leukemia. He is remembered with love and respect by many individuals who benefited from his work, teaching and care. Bob was a member and friend of the Society for Experimental Biology and Medicine (SEBM) ever since joining in 1976. He served as a Councilor (1994–1998) and President from 1999 to 2001, as well as a member of the Editorial Board from 1996 to 2001, and received the Distinguished Scientist Award in 2010.

Bob was a native of New York State and a magna cum laude graduate of Colgate University. He received his MD from Cornell University Medical College and subsequently interned at Boston City Hospital. He completed residency and fellowship training in Endocrinology and Metabolism at Northwestern University. Afterwards, he served in the Diabetes and Arthritis Field Research Unit of the US Public Health Service as a commissioned officer. Bob then joined the faculty of Harvard Medical School where he became chief of the Diabetes and Metabolism Division at Thorndike Memorial Laboratory. In 1974 he was recruited to the University of Washington as the Associate Director of the Northwest Lipid Research Clinic at Harborview Medical Center. He remained active at Harborview Medical Center for the rest of his life, becoming Director of the Northwest Lipid Research Clinic and Medical Specialties Clinic, Section Head for Endocrinology and Metabolism, a member of the Faculty Senate and Chairman of the Clinical Nutrition Committee. In 2008 he became the first faculty member to be honored with the Robert B McMillen Professorship in Lipid Research, an endowed chair created by friends and family in honor of one of Bob's grateful patients.

As a scientist Bob was a national leader in the study of lipoprotein physiology and cardiovascular disease risk. He was particularly interested in the complex relationship between dietary lipids and plasma lipids and the effects of diabetes mellitus on lipoproteins. A dedicated clinical researcher, his work was focused on the impact of lipids on cardiovascular disease and on the complex issue of cardiovascular disease prevention and treatment through the



dietary and pharmacological modification of plasma lipoproteins. However, Bob also made key contributions to the study of metabolic syndrome, obesity, gestational diabetes and insulin resistance. Bob published his first paper as a medical student in 1963 and continued to produce high-quality research right up until his death. Spanning almost 50 years, he published more than 400 research papers, commentaries, abstracts and book chapters. As Associate Director and, later, Director of the Northwest Lipid Research Clinic, Bob contributed to the national Coronary Primary Prevention Trial – the first multicenter study to

show that pharmacological reduction of low-density lipoprotein cholesterol levels could prevent coronary heart disease. He held numerous federal research and training grants over the years and participated in prominent national multisite studies, including the ASPEN study of atorvastatin, for which he chaired the steering committee, and the Look-AHEAD and ACCORD studies of type 2 diabetes. In addition to heading the Northwest Lipid Research Clinic, he directed the Clinical Research Core of the University of Washington Clinical Nutrition Research Unit. Bob received many awards and honors throughout his long and distinguished career. In addition to being honored by the SEBM, he also was inducted as a Fellow by the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the American College of Physicians, and received the Lester R. Savage Hope Heart Award, a Meritorious Service Award from the American Heart Association of Washington, and the Distinguished Service Citation from the American Diabetes Association.

As a clinician, Bob maintained a full schedule in the outpatient Lipid and Endocrine clinics as well as the inpatient Endocrine and Medicine services at Harborview Medical Center. Following his death, clinic staff were overwhelmed by the outpouring of sympathy and grief from his many patients who uniformly recalled Bob as a deeply caring physician who was resolutely friendly and approachable and would always make the extra effort to assure his

patients' wellbeing. Given his tremendous experience and expertise, Bob's lipid clinic was particularly well-respected, a clinic where both corporate executives and migrant workers sought out Bob's care.

As a teacher, Bob was known as an enthusiastic and influential contributor to core courses in Endocrinology and Nutrition at the University of Washington Medical School. During his career he supervised countless students and residents, and mentored numerous clinical and research fellows as well as postgraduate scholars. He was recognized for furthering the teaching of nutrition to medical students and raising community awareness for the role of nutrition in the prevention of cardiovascular disease.

Of the many attributes and talents his colleagues, friends and family will miss, perhaps the greatest is the boundless optimism and 'can do' attitude that Bob brought to everything he did. Even before he entered a room either his baritone laugh or his joyous whistling in the hallway announced Bob's cheerful presence. Indeed, music was a major part of his life from his time as an *a cappella* singer in college to his participation in a cathedral choir that performed for the Pope. One of Bob's greatest gifts to his family was his nightly after dinner piano concerts, always played with emotion and enthusiasm. One would be hard-pressed to find a physician/scientist of Bob's caliber with a warmer or more generous spirit, and he is missed by all those who knew him.