A Tribute to Morris David Kerstein, MD, FACS
January 13, 1938 – February 1, 2013
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Sometimes life allows us to learn from a person so gifted and gracious his presence remains even after he leaves the room…or the planet. That was Morris Kerstein. As one of the world’s pre-eminent vascular surgeons, his legacy to medical practice included more than 800 manuscripts published in peer-reviewed journals, 18 books, and 90 book chapters. His reach extended around the world as a “Doctor Without Borders”; his influence in the wound care arena was meaningful, deep, and far-reaching. During his distinguished academic and surgical career, he mentored countless medical students and colleagues with patience, humor, and a penetrating appreciation of human nature.

Dr. Kerstein found new ways to improve clinical outcomes wherever opportunities arose. His career in the US Navy began in 1963 and took him to Vietnam for 2 years as a trauma surgeon where he learned methods to combat heat stress; his validated guideline, published in 1982, is still used to help military personnel thrive in hot environments. While he continued his active clinical academic service in the US Naval Reserve, he also served as a medical military strategist in Beirut and during Operation Desert Storm, never failing to answer the call to help “wounded warriors” and those who serve them.

Ostomy Wound Management Clinical Editor Lia van Rijswijk remembered, “His experience led him to value the importance of multi- and interdisciplinary care on patient outcomes long before scientific data proved him correct. And he practiced what he preached. Among his publications was evidence of the importance and cost-effectiveness of moist wound healing in optimizing acute, surgical, and chronic wound outcomes.”

Dr. Kerstein also served wound care patients and professionals in several capacities through his involvement with the Association for the Advancement of Wound Care (AAWC): he was a Physician Board Member (1996–1998), President (1998–2000), and Past-President (2000–2001). He used his leadership skills to enhance the value of membership in the AAWC and to help the Association develop into the world’s largest multidisciplinary global wound care organization. AAWC Executive Director Tina Thomas noted, “Dr. Kerstein was the first president I worked with when I was hired in 1999. He was always very kind and patient as I learned the ropes of my position.” Tina reminisced about the way he acknowledged people who worked hard, an attribute that inspired those around him to give their all. “He had such a burning passion for wound care, and he continuously counseled our Board Members on ‘doing what is right,’” Tina said. “That certainly left a distinct impression on me— one that, along with other sage advice he provided through the years, made me appreciate my own passion for my position as the Association’s director.”

Tina also mentioned how a statement from John McDonald, MD, FACS, another AAWC President, applies to Dr. Kerstein: “Wound care specialists are the ones who rise to the top… They see patients so terribly wounded that others have given up on and no one else wants to see.”

Coincidentally, the AAWC recently launched a new category of membership that offers significantly reduced dues for those on active military duty and military civilian healthcare workers. With this in mind, Tina said, “Given Dr. Kerstein’s military service, followed by all of his years of selfless work to educate, I bet he’s smiling down at us right now for ‘doing the right thing.’”

Visit www.aawconline.org to become a “military” member the AAWC.

This article was not subject to the Ostomy Wound Management peer-review process.

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