ON THE BEAT

Obituary

Dr. Paul Allen Ebert, former president of the American College of Cardiology, died on April 21 in Sacramento, Calif., of an acute myocardial infarction. He was 76.

The Columbus, Ohio, native, who chose medical school over Major League Baseball, went on to establish his reputation as a pediatric heart surgeon.

PAUL ALLEN EBERT, M.D.

By the time he started medical school at Ohio State University in 1954, Dr. Ebert had become an All America athlete in basketball and baseball, had been drafted by the Milwaukee Hawks basketball team, and had received offers from baseball's New York Giants and Pittsburgh Pirates.

Their loss was medicine's gain.

After he completed his internship and residency at Johns Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore, under Dr. Alfred Blalock, a heart surgeon, Dr. Ebert spent 2 years as a senior assistant surgeon at the National Heart Institute, National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, Md., under the direction of Dr. Eugene Braunwald, where he specialized in thoracic and cardiovascular surgery.

Dr. Ebert went on to serve for 4 years as professor of surgery at Duke University Medical Center, Durham, N.C. From 1971 to 1975, he chaired the department of surgery at Cornell University, New York. He honed his skills as a pediatric cardiac surgeon at New York Hospital until he accepted an offer in 1975 to chair the surgery department at the University of California, San Francisco, taking over for Dr. J. Englebert Dunphy, who was retiring. During his tenure at UCSF until 1986, Dr. Ebert worked with other pediatric cardiologists, including Dr. Abe Rudolph, to shape the field of infant cardiac surgery, and recruit residents from around the country.

Dr. Ebert took the helm as director of the American College of Surgeons in Chicago in 1986. Under his leadership, the ACS launched a program in managed care and maintained a lobby in Congress for patient choice.

Dr. Ebert also served as president of the American Association for Thoracic Surgery, the Society of University Surgeons, and the Western Thoracic Surgical Association. In 1989, he received the National Collegiate Athletic Association's Theodore Roosevelt Award, presented annually to a "distinguished citizen of national reputation based on outstanding life accomplishment."

Those who knew Dr. Ebert well remember him as kind and sympathetic to patients, and highly skilled in guiding his trainees.

He is survived by his wife, three children, and five grandchildren.

Cardiologists on the Move

Dr. Jagat Narula, renowned researcher and cardiologist, has been named medical director of the Memorial Heart and Vascular Institute at Long Beach (Calif.) Memorial Medical Center.

Dr. Narula will facilitate a partnership between MHVI and the University of California, Irvine, School of Medicine, where he will retain his role as chief of cardiology.

JAGAT NARULA, M.D.

Before joining the faculty at Irvine in 2003, Dr. Narula served as chief of cardiology and director of the heart failure and transplant program at Hahnemann University School of Medicine in Philadelphia.

His research in heart failure and atherosclerosis, with a focus on development of noninvasive imaging techniques, has been funded in part by the National Institutes of Health.

The founding editor of Heart Failure Clinics of North America, Dr. Narula has published several hundred research papers and edited more than 20 books or journal supplements. In addition to his medical degree, he holds a PhD in cardiovascular immunology.

—Jane Locastro

CMS Adds Readmission Data to Its Hospital Compare Web Site

Nearly 20% of Medicare patients admitted to a hospital after an acute myocardial infarction will be readmitted within 30 days, according to historical data released by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

The all-cause, 30-day readmission rate for acute MI (19.9%) is similar to those for patients originally admitted for heart failure (24.5%) and pneumonia (18.2%).

The figures, based on 3 years of data, were posted to Medicare's Hospital Compare Web site. The readmission rates were produced with statistical models that rely on Medicare claims and enrollment information, according to the CMS.

The Web site (www.hospitalcompare.hhs.gov) provides consumers with quality information on local hospitals. The analysis of readmission rates is part of the Obama administration's larger health reform efforts, including his proposal to bundle payments for inpatient services and postacute care within 30 days of discharge. "The President and Congress have both identified the reduction of readmissions as a target area for health reform," Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius said in a statement.

The Hospital Compare readmissions data include hospital by hospital information, as well as national figures.They exclude planned hospital treatments such as readmission for a scheduled heart bypass or coronary angioplasty.

—Mary Ellen Schneider

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