Tribute

Stephen J. Qualman, MD
(1953-2008)

The field of pediatric cancer pathology lost a leader on August 30, 2008, with the passing of Stephen J. Qualman, MD, following a year-long battle with pancreatic cancer.

During his 23-year tenure at Nationwide Children’s Hospital, Dr. Qualman guided one of the largest pediatric pathology centers in the country. Known informally as the “Father of Biorepository,” he pioneered tissue banking, with the foresight to know that linking clinical information to pathologic specimens would yield much greater potential for unraveling the pathogenesis of cancer and enhancing the discovery of new therapies.

In 1987, with William Newton, MD, Dr. Qualman secured NIH funding for the first pediatric prospective tissue procurement system within the Cooperative Human Tissue Network (CHTN). Today, the Biopathology Center (BPC) at Nationwide Children’s has more than 1 million specimens in procurement, globally distributes more than 30,000 specimens per year, and receives more than $6 million in NIH funding.

Dr. Qualman’s enthusiasm for teaching and discovery was evident in his mentoring of junior pathologists and his contribution to various study groups and research committees. His initiatives in bioinformatics including virtual microscopy, electronic informed consent for tissue procurement and an electronic research medical record continue to be developed at the BPC.

After retiring from his professional duties in 2007 to pursue treatment and spend time with his family, Dr. Qualman was elected as an American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) Fellow, a Johns Hopkins Society of Scholars member, and received an American Cancer Society Hero of Hope award.

Apart from his professional accomplishments, friends and colleagues recall his sense of humor and camaraderie, best displayed during his weekly “rhabdo reviews” around the multi-headed microscope, and in weeks leading up to football games between rival teams of The Ohio State University (home to many colleagues), and his alma mater, the University of Michigan.

Dr. Qualman leaves an inheritance of hope and discovery in the treatment of childhood cancer. His life’s accomplishments continue to inspire fellow scientists and continue to improve the health and wellbeing of children with cancer.