

## **Remembering Harry K. Genant, MD**

1942-2021

January 16, 2021

We are writing with the news that our long-time colleague, mentor, teacher, and friend Harry K. Genant, MD, passed away peacefully at his home in Napa on January 14.

Many of us knew Harry as a charismatic and entrepreneurial physician scientist who inspired, with his enthusiasm and brilliance, collaborators from around the world for nearly half a century. His trainees and colleagues will remember him as a generous and convivial host at his Tiburon home where many occasions and professional milestones were celebrated over the years. To his family, he was a devoted husband to Gail Genant, MD, his wife of 52 years; cherished father to Laura, Jonathan, and Justin; and proud grandfather of five.

Born in Freeport, Illinois in 1942, Harry's first career aspiration was to become an astronaut though he realized after a short stint at the U.S. Air Force Academy that he wasn't cut out for military-style discipline. Fortunately for generations of musculoskeletal radiologists and their patients, Harry found his vocation in medicine and radiology. In this realm, his groundbreaking research in non-invasive and quantitative imaging methods for osteoporosis, arthritis and orthopedics made significant contributions to our understanding of bone fragility and our ability to evaluate patients at risk of osteoporotic fractures and predict their response to therapy. Friend and collaborator Daniel Rosenthal, MD, from Harvard's Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston recalled that "Harry was one of the most brilliant radiologists that I ever encountered. I always felt that he set a standard of excellence that was almost unattainable by anyone else." Lynne Steinbach, MD, former Chief of Musculoskeletal Imaging at UCSF and President of the International Skeletal Society noted that "Harry was a true giant in Radiology. Intelligence, inquisitiveness, and innovation were characteristics that propelled him to the top. He had a great influence on my career."

As a testament to his stature in the profession, Dr. Genant was a Fellow of the American College of Radiology and an Honorary Fellow of the Royal College of Radiologists, United Kingdom. He was recognized by the International Osteoporosis Foundation (IOF) with the prestigious Medal of Achievement in 2019 and the Olof Johnell Science Award in 2013. The International Society for Clinical Densitometry recognized Dr. Genant as The Paul D. Miller ISCD Service Award winner in 2013. In 2012 the American College of Rheumatology elected him as an ACR Master; that same year, he was The Louis Avioli Annual Lecturer for the American Society of Bone and Mineral Disease. In 2004, Dr. Genant gave the Radiologic Society of North America's Annual Oration, The Future of Bone Imaging in Osteoporosis.

Dr. Genant received his medical degree from Northwestern University in Evanston, IL in 1967, completed an internship on the Osler Service at Johns Hopkins University in 1968, and trained as a resident in medicine and radiology at the University of Chicago, where he was Chief Resident and Assistant Professor in Radiology during the years 1968 – 1974. Dr. Genant joined the faculty of the University of California, San Francisco in 1974 as Chief of Musculoskeletal Radiology, where he remained for more than 30 years, becoming Professor of Radiology, Medicine, Epidemiology and Orthopaedic Surgery.

Among his many accomplishments, Dr. Genant was perhaps most gratified to mentor and train dozens of fellows worldwide, many of whom affectionately called him "Clint Westwood" for his striking resemblance to the actor Clint Eastwood. Today, Dr. Genant's mentees are national and international leaders in bone research in their own right, a fitting tribute to the strength of his sponsorship. Miriam Bredella, MD, UCSF alumna and Professor at Harvard

Medical School, noted that "Harry was a great mentor, sponsor, and role model. I would not be where I am today without him." Thomas M. Link, MD, Chief of Musculoskeletal Imaging at UCSF and an international graduate as well remarked that "Harry shaped multiple careers throughout the world, his generosity and support towards international radiologists was unsurpassed and he had a major role in defining the international reputation of UCSF Radiology. We will miss him very much."

Dr. Genant founded the Osteoporosis and Arthritis Research Group (OARG) in the Department of Radiology, UCSF, and served as its Executive Director until his retirement in 2004. This group, once numbering over 130 physicians, scientists and research associates, produced field-defining research in imaging for osteoporosis, arthritis, and orthopedics. Sharmila Majumdar, PhD, who was hired by Dr. Genant as an Assistant Professor in 1989, remarked that "We in the bone research field have lost an anchor and legend, one who twenty years after retiring was still participating actively and recognized by students and researchers worldwide."

Seeking a new outlet for his energy and creativity, Dr. Genant co-founded Synarc (now Synarc-BioClinica) in 1998, a global, contract research organization (CRO) specializing in management of quantitative imaging and biomarkers in large, multicenter, multinational, pharmaceutical drug trials. Dr. Genant served as a Board Member and Chairman Emeritus for Synarc-BioClinica, and at the time of his passing was a Senior Consultant. Thomas Fuerst, PhD, BioClinica's Chief Scientific Officer, noted that "even as we are devastated to have lost Harry as a mentor, leader and friend, we are confident in the strength of his legacy."

During his extraordinarily productive academic career, Dr. Genant was editor or co-editor of more than 40 books and author or co-author of more than 300 chapters or invited articles, over 600 articles in peer-reviewed scientific and medical journals, and over 1500 abstracts presented at national and international scientific meeting. Not content to live a life of leisure during his emeritus years, Dr. Genant was a highly-sought speaker at professional society meetings, greatly enjoying these gatherings of physicians and scientists from around the world where he was just as likely to be happily reconnecting with old friends as he was to be cultivating new friendships.

Tireless in his service to the profession, Dr. Genant held many leadership roles, including as President of the Association of University Radiologists, International Skeletal Society, and International Bone Density Workshop series (also Founder). Scientific Chair of the First through Sixth International Congresses on Osteoporosis in China. Chair of the WHO Task Force on Osteoporosis; International Steering Committee for Artificial Gravity for the joint US, German and Russia Space Programs. Co-Chair of the Second International Conference on Osteoporosis (Japan), IOF Global Initiative on Vertebral Fracture Assessment, and IOF Bone Quality Working Group. Member of the Radiologic Devices Panel of the US Food and Drug Agency. Board Member of the International Osteoporosis Foundation. Dr. Genant also lent his expertise and time as Associate Editor of Bone and Journal of Orthopaedic Translation, and Editorial Board Member of Osteoporosis International, and many others over the years.

Among Dr. Genant's numerous awards are honorary lifetime memberships for the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons and the International Society for the Study of the Lumbar Spine and honorary memberships in the Italian Radiologic Society, the Chinese Osteoporosis Society, the Chilean Society of Osteology, the Hungarian Society of Osteology, and the European Society of Skeletal Radiology.

Harry matched his accomplishments in academia and business with athletic skills as a marathon runner, sailor, hiker, golfer, and cyclist. He greatly enjoyed travel adventures with his family, whether the old cities of Europe and Asia, or the mountains, parks, and waterways of the U.S. West and beyond. In his life well-lived, Harry took great joy in the company of his faithful canine companion Lucy, photographing resplendent sunsets over the Golden Gate, and reunions with friends and family at scenic points both near and far.

Harry communicated with his friends and former mentees Drs. Claus and Maren Glüer, Dr. Sharmila Majumdar and Dr. Didier Hans via the handle Skeleton Dance. For the group, Claus remarked, "The skeletons have stopped dancing and mourn the passing of Harry. We owe you so much, we have lost so much, but your spirit and legacy will remain – in our hearts and in science."

Sharmila Majumdar, PhD  
Margaret Hart Surbeck Distinguished Professor in Advanced Imaging  
Vice Chair for Research

Thomas M. Link, MD, PhD  
Professor and Chief, Musculoskeletal Imaging

Christopher P. Hess, MD, PhD  
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