



Obituary

Memorial statement for Joseph J. Tepas III



Joseph J. Tepas III, MD, FACS, FAAP, died on December 20, 2019, after a long battle with squamous cell carcinoma, a tumor that was possibly related to the immunosuppression required following a bilateral lung transplant performed in 2015 for rapidly progressive idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis. Joe was born in Buffalo, New York, in 1946 and spent his early years in Baltimore, Maryland. Following graduation from the College of the Holy Cross and Georgetown University School of Medicine he joined the United States Navy and completed residency training in Surgery at the Portsmouth Naval Hospital. He then trained in Pediatric Surgery at Johns Hopkins. After 5 years of active duty in the Naval Medical Corps at Portsmouth Naval Hospital, he joined the faculty at the University of Florida College of Medicine, Jacksonville, Florida. He and Ray Alexander were the first two faculty members hired to start the University of Florida academic surgery residency program in Jacksonville. Dr. Tepas served for 32 years as a leader the Department of Surgery, including 11 years as the Chair of Surgery, helping to build the department into what it is today. One of his true passions was surgical education.

During his career, he helped train and mentor over 150 residents and fellows, 16 of whom went on to pursue pediatric surgery. At the time of his death, he was an Emeritus Professor of Surgery and Pediatrics.

His interest in the care of injured children and childhood injury prevention grew in Jacksonville. Verification of Level One Trauma Centers for adults and children occurred largely as a result of his leadership. Later, he joined the efforts of the Florida Committee on Trauma and the Florida Department of Health to create a formal trauma system for the state. He is widely recognized as the principal architect of the Pediatric component of the Florida Trauma System and was one of the founding members of the national organization Injury Free Coalition for Kids. He continued his service to the Navy by conducting a Pediatric Surgery Clinic at the Naval Air Station in Jacksonville. He retired from the Naval Reserve with the rank of Captain. His academic achievements included nearly 200 peer-reviewed articles, 30 book chapters, and 250 national and international presentations. His research included NIH-funded investigation of

biomarkers of acute brain injury as well as multi-institutional investigations of the role of biomarkers of metabolic derangement in defining timing and technique of operative intervention in high risk premature infants with necrotizing enterocolitis.

Dr. Tepas was a reviewer for multiple scholarly journals and a member of leading surgical societies such as the American Pediatric Surgical Association, the American College of Surgeons, the American Surgical Association, the Society of University Surgeons, the Southern Surgical Association, and The American Association for the Surgery of Trauma. He was a devoted member of the American Pediatric Surgical Association, serving as Chair of the Trauma Registry Subcommittee and APSA Surgical Quality Alliance representative to the Southern Surgical Association, in addition to contributing numerous publications to the Journal of Pediatric Surgery. Dr. Tepas will live on forever through his legacy: dedication to the surgical care of children, prolific researcher, consummate

educator, mentor, and gentleman. He is survived by his loving wife Jean Ryan, as well as three children (Kate, Meghan, and Joey), and seven grandchildren.

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