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IN MEMORIAM



Kenneth Hisao Ozawa, MD, 1931-2008

IT IS WITH DEEP SADNESS that we share the news that Kenneth Ozawa, MD, passed away on November 29, 2008.

For many years, Dr. Ozawa chaired this Medical Society's Emergency Care Committee made up of the emergency department medical directors from our region. This is one of the few medical societies in California to have such a committee. It was under his direction, and his gentle but persuasive leadership, that we performed the first regional audit of ED deaths; that trauma audit survey laid the groundwork and built community and physician support for establishing the UCD Trauma Center.

Ken also organized the now retired Hospital Emergency Alert Radio system, consisting of dedicated radios in each ED. This HEAR system allowed communication between disaster preparedness facilities and a series of portable radios installed in key vehicles.

In cooperation with the Hospital Council of Northern California, Ken led our committee through the process of drafting and implementing our region's first diversion policy in the early 1980s. He was among the first to call for a new, stronger policy that has proven to be so effective.

Ken led our committee in developing two position papers: "The Need for a Second Trauma Center and Physician Specialty Coverage of Hospital Emergency Departments," February 1988 and "Rescuing Emergency Care," September 1989. The papers represent the need for additional trauma facilities (in the south and in the north) and established dialogue regarding the problem of specialty coverage of the ED in our region.

Ken was a key, if not the founding member, of the Sheriff's Sacramento County Medical Reserve Corp. He was the recipient of the Medical Society's highest honor, the Golden Stethoscope Award in 1990, for his devotion to patient care and the medical needs of the community.

Ken was a family practice physician with a keen interest in public safety. His leadership in these fields was always a part of his participation as a Delegate to the California Medical Association House of Delegates where his resolutions impacted public policy and legislation in California.

One of his close friends and fellow Golden Stethoscope Honoree, Henry Go, MD, had this to say about Dr. Ozawa:

"In the big pond of Human Experience we will forever see the ripples from a life well lived. His good works place him in the pantheon of fine physicians who did good works in this valley.

"Kenneth Ozawa shared with me the same orbits as general practitioners here in Sacramento; we were of the same cut of cloth, same ideals and beliefs, commitments, but I was never the moral compass of the community. He had a sense of duty: to patients, community, family, organized medicine, to his country: to wit his years of service in the reserves. He was loyal. In reflecting on his years of internment in the camps during the second world war, he never spoke with bitterness. There was a spiritual side to him; once when we were working on a quality issue over a doctor's performance, I was thinking of preponderance of fact: he smiled at me and said, 'He was weighed and found wanting.' Simple as that.

"Like a shaman, ambiguities did not confuse him. He could see Truth. And he had that smile. At one meeting he looked across to his colleague, smiled and simply said, 'I think you are wrong.' The doctor reflected later he did not sleep well that night.

"He never lost his link with the common man: 'We all being God's children; we all have our place under the sun.'

"And for those of us left on that pond, what does he leave us? His close colleagues say, 'the mentoring, the passage of knowledge.' I say also his legacy of Truth, service above self, a life lived well, with redeeming consequence."

Dr. Ozawa, was born in St. Helena on July 21, 1931, earned his medical degree from Loma Linda in 1957 and completed his rotating internship at the U.S. Naval Hospital in Oakland, in 1958. He was a battalion surgeon and captain with the United States Marine Corp Reserves. He is survived by his wife, Leatrice, his daughters, Dede Fernandez, Emi Johnston and Carole Opsahl, and six grandchildren.

— Bill Sandberg and Henry Go, MD