In Memoriam: Eric Gall

Arthritis Center
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Eric P. Gall, co-founder and former director of the University of Arizona Arthritis Center and professor emeritus in the College of Medicine - Tucson, died in Tucson on Feb. 26. He was 79.

"Dr. Gall was a giant in the field of rheumatology," said C. Kent Kwoh, director of the Arthritis Center and chief of the Division of Rheumatology.

Among his accomplishments, Kwoh said, was the establishment of Introduction to Clinical Medicine Physical Exam Experience in Rheumatic Disease. The program that allowed first-year medical students to interact directly with patients with specific rheumatic diseases very early in their careers, and has been modeled at medical schools around the country and the world.

"I owe a large debt of gratitude to Eric, as he helped to recruit me to the University of Arizona. He was beloved by the many medical students, residents, fellows and junior faculty that he mentored. We will certainly miss him," Kwoh said.

"I feel very honored to have met and worked with Dr. Gall. Not only was he a leader in rheumatology and a gifted teacher, but also a caring physician who was loved by his patients. His contributions to the Department of Medicine and the institution are many and are outstanding. He will be very much missed," said Monica Kraft, chair of the Department of Medicine.

A native of Cincinnati, Gall earned his bachelor's degree in zoology with honors from the University of Pennsylvania in 1962 and his medical doctorate from the same institution in 1966. He completed his internal medicine residency at the University of Cincinnati in 1968 and a fellowship in rheumatology at the University of Pennsylvania in 1973.

A member of the College of Medicine - Tucson faculty for 27 years, Gall served as director of the Arthritis Center from 1985-1994 and again from 2010-2013. During his tenure at the University, he also served as professor of medicine and chief of the rheumatology division, and held joint appointments in the family and community medicine and orthopaedic surgery departments. He also held the Charles A.L. and Suzanne M. Stephens Endowed Chair in Rheumatology. Before his return to the University in 2010, Gall served as chair of the department of medicine at the Chicago Medical School at Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science.

Gall retired from the University of Arizona in December 2016 and was named professor emeritus of medicine in March 2017.

"Yesterday, the University of Arizona Arthritis Center lost a great leader and the co-founder of the Arthritis Center. All whose paths crossed Eric's will share in the deep loss of a warm,
engaging friend, a devoted and deeply caring physician, a storyteller offering many previously shared stories, and a loving husband, father and grandfather. Yes, Eric, you will be remembered and revered for the sunshine and good cheer you offered to all in our own individual lives," said Professor Emeritus Robert G. Volz, co-founder of the Arthritis Center.

Gall’s major research interests were in new treatments for arthritis, the development of arthritis, metabolic bone disease, hypermobility disorders, curriculum and teaching methodology, and hemophilic arthritis. He was a national expert and served on numerous committees addressing medical school curriculum, public health and advocacy, and rheumatology instruction and training.

He was a founding member of the American College of Rheumatology, where he also served on the board of directors. Noted for his activity in many professional societies, he served as president of the Association of Rheumatology Health Professionals (now called the Association of Rheumatology Professionals), a division of the American College of Rheumatology. He also was chair of the Public Health Committee for the Arthritis Foundation.

Gall authored numerous articles on rheumatology, including many in Arthritis and Rheumatism, the Journal of Clinical Rheumatology and American Family Physician. He also wrote three books: "Rheumatic Disease: Rehabilitation and Management," "The Examination of the Musculoskeletal System" and "Rheumatoid Arthritis: An Illustrated Guide to Pathology, Diagnosis and Management."

Decorated with a Bronze Star Medal for his service in Vietnam, Gall won many awards over the years. He was named master in the American College of Physicians and master in the American College of Rheumatology in 2005. He had been named by his peers for inclusion in Best Doctors in America from 2001 until his retirement in 2016. In 2012, Gall was honored with the Arthritis Foundation’s top honor, the Freedom of Movement Award.

Gall is survived by his wife, Kathy; daughter, Gretchen; son, Michael; and grandchildren Talia and Noah.

A funeral mass and memorial services will be held in August. In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations to the Eric P. Gall, MD Lecture Endowment [3] at the Arthritis Center.

A version of this article [4] originally appeared on the Arthritis Center website.

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