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Robert D. Zimmerman, MD

E. Russell, V. Mathews, J. Tsiouris, C. Wood and T Naidich

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Robert D. Zimmerman, MD

A long-time senior member of the American Society of Neuroradiology (ASNR) and my dearest friend Robert D. Zimmerman, MD, passed away after a prolonged illness, in the presence of his beloved wife Ellen and his 2 children, Max and Molly, on October 5, 2023.

A magna cum laude, Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Rutgers University, he received his MD degree from the Albert Einstein College of Medicine. I met Bob in the residency program at Montefiore Medical Center in the Bronx. When Bob returned as faculty after his fellowship with Dr David O. Davis at George Washington University, recruited by the Division Chief Dr Norman Leeds, a founding member of the ASNR, I was the chief resident, and we hit it off. His infectious love for his specialty and his clinical excellence and dedication to teaching led me to follow him, and we remained the closest of friends for more than 40 years.

Bob went on to a stellar career in 1983 at what was then New York Hospital, currently NewYork-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Medical Center. He was a highly sought-after expert for his consummate clinical skills because referring physicians trusted his opinion and judgment. At the time, New York Hospital had just installed one of the first superconducting MR imaging scanners in the country, allowing Dr Zimmerman and his colleagues the unprecedented opportunity to explore and publish early articles on the full gamut of neurologic diseases, including meningiomas, head trauma, intracranial hemorrhage, and periventricular signal changes. He was a productive researcher, with 118 peer-reviewed publications, 15 book chapters, and more than 150 visiting professorships and invited lectures.

His enduring interest in and aptitude for teaching and education led to many important roles at Cornell and established a career direction that guided him throughout his professional and administrative work. Some of his key leadership roles included program director of the radiology residency and the neuroradiology fellowship, vice chair for education and faculty development, and executive vice chair of the Department of Radiology. He also served as the radiology representative on the NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital Graduate Medical Education Committee for more than 15 years. He was a recipient of the Robin Watson Award for Excellence in Radiology Teaching, the Annual Teaching Award from the neurosurgical residents, and the Teaching Excellence Award from Cornell Medical College. His residents chose to honor his excellence as a mentor, role model, and teacher, with the Robert D. Zimmerman Outstanding Educator Award given yearly at Cornell.

As Bob became involved in service to organized neuroradiology, he was recognized for his intellect, accomplishments, and interpersonal skills by society leaders. He served as president of the Eastern Neuroradiological Society (1992–1993) and president of the New York Roentgen Society (2003–2004).

ASNR leadership also recognized his attributes, not the least of which was his engaging personality and pithy sense of humor,



and over the years, apart from his numerous scientific presentations, he provided notable service and leadership on many ASNR committees. Bob was a member of the Education Committee for 15 years. Leadership roles also included chair of the Fellowship Program Director's Committee (1991–1998), chair of Publications Committee (2005–2008), and chair of the Continuing Medical Education Subcommittee on Electronic Education (2001–2004).

Bob's dedication to and expertise in educational issues led him to take on a leading role in the revision of the neuroradiology fellowship training standards for the ASNR. He had been a long-term advocate of the fellowship match and worked closely with others at ASNR, including David Yousem, in its successful implementation. He chaired the Association of Program Directors in Radiology Subcommittee that developed a "Resident Core Curriculum and Delineation of Resident Responsibilities and Training Goals for Neuroradiology."

Bob served for more than 20 years in one capacity or another as a member of the ASNR Executive Committee, and he served as secretary of the ASNR (1998–2000).

As president-elect and then as president of the ASNR (2008–2009), he worked on a number of issues that had a lasting positive impact on the ASNR and our specialty. Bob had an ambitious agenda and brought his involvement in other organizations to bear. As a member of the Radiology Residency Review Committee (RRC) of the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME), he believed that the

ASNR should serve as the major vehicle for our members' ability to meet the requirements of the developing American Board of Radiology (ABR) program for maintenance of certification, and he worked hard on this during his tenure. He also began discussions with the ABR, along with Pat Hudgins, to allow the neuroradiology recertification test to be given at the annual meeting (reducing cost and inconvenience for members).

As 1 of 8 members of the RRC representing neuroradiology (2004–2012), he spent countless hours reviewing and monitoring radiology programs across the country, as well as working tirelessly to define training requirements for radiology residents, neuroradiology fellows, and endovascular surgical neuroradiology fellows. He made important contributions to the revision of training standards in accordance with new ACGME requirements, while limiting additional administrative burdens on program directors.

His considerable work for the RRC and ABR was a natural outgrowth of his educational bent and dedication to neuroradiology. He served for 20 years as an ABR oral board examiner, during the time when we brought our own test cases to display on view boxes.

As a trustee of the ABR, he served as chair of the Neuroradiology Subspecialty Examination Committee during a period of rapid change in board certification and examination methodology. As chair of the Subspecialty Certification Committee, he helped develop an entirely new examination. He served as neuroradiology section chair for the Examination of the Future Committee and worked with the Maintenance of Certification Committees, the

Interventional Radiology Implementation Task Force, and an ACGME committee on radiology milestones. With the inception of the DR Neuroradiology Online Longitudinal Assessment Committee in 2017, he served as a senior reviewer until his untimely passing.

As written in a tribute by his department at Cornell following his passing, Bob achieved the pinnacle of success as a neuroradiologist, researcher, educator, and servant leader. He elevated the view of the neuroradiologist in the larger radiology and medical and patient communities by virtue of his clinical and investigative endeavors, his mentoring, his development of interdisciplinary cooperative projects, and, most important, his seriousness of purpose, sense of humor, and personal integrity.

Bob was a unique and exemplary servant leader for organized radiology, but his most important and lasting contribution was his caring nature and his unbridled enthusiasm for his specialty and for our trainees. He imprinted generations of residents and fellows with his passion, leading them to follow him. These are his “scientific children,” his lasting legacy. He will be sorely missed by so many of us who knew him well.

**E. Russell, with contributions from Drs
V. Mathews
J. Tsiouris
C. Wood
T. Naidich**

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