

TRIBUTE TO A FOUNDING FATHER

TO THE EDITOR:

Professor Jack Froom, of the Department of Family Medicine, State University of New York at Stony Brook, died on June 25, 2002, after a brief illness. He was one of the founding fathers of the specialty in the United States, entering academia in 1971 at the University of Rochester after more than 2 decades of small-town general practice in Petaluma, California. In 1967, on completion of appropriate training, he set up and operated a coronary care unit at the local community hospital.

Jack believed passionately that only high quality-research could set family medicine on an equal footing with other medical disciplines. Over a span of 30 years, first at Rochester and then at Stony Brook, he established his credentials as an investigator of common disorders—among them otitis media and depression. He understood the dependence of primary care research on good record keeping, and he became an internationally recognized expert in the classification of disease. From 1976 until 1991, he was US representative to, and Chair of the

Classification Committee, of the World Organization of National Colleges, Academies, and Academic Associations of General Practitioners/Family Physicians (WONCA). In 1987 and again in 1990, he received awards for excellence in research from the Society of Teachers of Family Medicine, and he was among the first family doctors to receive grants in excess of 1 million dollars for projects carried out by international networks of family practitioners in the United States, Canada, Europe, New Zealand, Australia, and Israel. For a time he served as a reviewer of grant requests for the National Institutes of Mental Health.

Jack's inherent skepticism made him a practitioner of evidence-based medicine long before it received its catchy title and he had an early grasp of the dangers to the patient of the overly enthusiastic use of certain diagnostic modalities. A warm family man whose home was a gathering place not just for medical scientists but for people of ideas from many fields of artistic and intellectual endeavor, Jack will be sorely missed by his friends and colleagues all over the world.

*Joseph Herman, MD
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