



***John F. Connolly, M.D.***  
***1936-2007***

**“Friend” • “Mentor” • “Teacher”**

Dr. John F. Connolly, respected orthopaedic surgeon and educator, died unexpectedly at his home in Orlando, FL, on July 20, 2007, at the age of 71. He is remembered as a born educator and leader endowed with conviction and compassion, a mentor, friend, and healer.

Born in Teaneck, NJ, on January 22, 1936, Connolly was a 1953 graduate of Regis High School in New York City. He graduated cum laude in 1957 from St. Peter's College in Jersey City, NJ, and earned his medical degree with AOA honors at the New Jersey College of Medicine (formerly Seton Hall) in 1961. He then completed surgical training in Seattle, New York and the University of Miami Jackson Memorial Hospital. After two years service as a captain in the United States Air Force, he took a faculty position at Vanderbilt University (1968-1973), followed by a position at the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) where he conducted the bulk of his research career.

When asked why they initially made the move to Omaha, Connolly's wife, Anne, stated, “John felt that he had the opportunity to *build* something there. He wanted to challenge himself.” And that he did.

Connolly's role at UNMC was pivotal in the development of what is now a prominent residency program. In 1974 he joined the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery and Rehabilitation as its first full-time chairman and built a nationally recognized orthopedic residency training program. In 1985, he oversaw the development of the joint venture orthopaedics program of Creighton University-University of Nebraska, which he chaired until 1990.

“Until then, there had been a working relationship between Creighton and the University,” said Walter Huurman, professor emeritus at UNMC's Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, and longtime friend and colleague of Connolly. “John recognized the deficits in each program and combined them to make a single, stronger program.” Creighton was lacking in basic science and orthopaedic research, and the University program was lacking in trauma. The residency review committee (RRC) was pushing for a combined program. It was a good fit.

Under Connolly's direction the combined program was soon able to attract residents from a much wider region. He began aggressively recruiting progressively qualified individuals for the residency program, as well as several new faculty members. During his term as chairman a total of 43 residents graduated from the program. Connolly also recruited several faculty members including Robert Cochran, II, M.D., Walter Huurman, M.D., Louis Lippiello, Ph.D., Dennis Chakkalakal, Ph.D., W. Michael Walsh, M.D., Paul Esposito, M.D., David Brown, M.D., Michael McGuire, M.D., and current department Chairman, Kevin Garvin, M.D.

Although Dr. Connolly had broad academic interests, much of his research focused on the healing process of difficult fractures. He did pioneering work on bone marrow stem cells, including stimulating the bone marrow through biologic and electrical techniques to promote healing of cartilage and bone. It was this work that allowed him extensive teaching and travel experiences, including as a senior Fulbright scholar at the University of Western Australia and as a trauma consultant in the Russian-Afghan war in 1986. During his successful career as an orthopaedic surgeon, Connolly authored more than two-hundred research articles and chapters and wrote seven medical textbooks, including the Third Edition of DePalma's *Management of Fractures and Dislocations*: an Atlas which became a standard-bearer on the topic internationally. In addition, he was an oral examiner for the American Board of Orthopaedic Surgery for 20 years.

In 1990, Connolly left UNMC to become the academic chairman and program director of the Orthopedics Residency Program at Orlando Regional Medical Center (ORMC) and guided its development for the next 15 years. He raised the level of that orthopedic residency program from a relatively small community program to one of the most recognized in the nation.

Throughout the years, Connolly continued to show his support for UNMC's Department of Orthopaedic Surgery. In 2004, a donation by Connolly established *The Connolly Orthopaedic Surgery and Rehabilitation Fund* to support ongoing research activities.

“I believe the old saying ‘you make a living by what you get; and you make a life by what you give,’” Connolly had said at the time. “Research was fulfilling in my life, and this fund will be used to help residents and others conduct research and solve problems, which in turn benefits our entire field.”

After retirement, Connolly continued to teach and guide as Professor Emeritus in Orlando and established the Schuh Scholarship Program at his alma mater, St. Peter's College in Jersey City, to mentor and nurture future generations of scientists. He continued in clinical practice, volunteering at a local health clinic in Orlando and was very active in his parish, Holy Family Catholic Church. He enjoyed traveling to visit his six daughters and their families around the country, and continued to challenge himself to learn and read extensively, truly a lifelong student and scientist. The encouragement Connolly lent to others, his positive influence and love of a good joke will be treasured.

Colleagues and residents from around the country remember Connolly with great affection and respect. A friend and colleague from St. Peters College described him as, "intellectually curious, doggedly industrious, and a very creative thinker with a great sense of humor." Connolly was constantly searching for truth and was always true to himself, he said.

Beyond his professional achievements, Connolly was also a devoted husband and father of six daughters, and deeply committed to his religious beliefs. He is survived by his loving wife of 43 years, Anne, and six daughters, Mari, Katie, Ednamarie, Jeanine, Anne McGrath and Claire. He was also blessed by fifteen grandchildren at the time of his death.

In Orlando, wake services were held at Woodlawn Funeral Home on August 2, 2007, and a Funeral Mass was held at Holy Family Catholic Church on August 4th. He was buried in New Jersey, with Mass held at St. Aloysius in Caldwell, NJ, on Monday August 6th, and burial at Holy Cross Cemetery in North Arlington, New Jersey.