



Shukri F. Khuri



Dr. Shukri F. Khuri passed away peacefully at the age of 65, surrounded by family and friends, on September 26, 2008, at his Westwood home, after courageously battling brain cancer for more than eighteen months. A gifted and spirited surgeon and researcher, his absolute love for life enabled him to achieve remarkable professional success and effectively pursue his passions for family, friends and various interests.

Born in Jerusalem, Dr. Khuri fled with his parents to Syria and then to Beirut, Lebanon. He later attended the American University of Beirut (AUB), graduating with distinction from college and medical school. In addition to excelling academically, he had a passion for the arts and was a producer of student musicals. The theatre is where he met Randa Domian, who later became his wife, lifelong supporter and best friend.

He completed his surgical residency at the AUB hospital in Beirut, training in research at Johns Hopkins Hospital, and cardiac surgery at the Mayo Clinic. He was recruited in 1976 to the West Roxbury Veteran's Administration (VA) surgical service, where he soon expanded the surgical

research laboratory and became a major contributor in the field of cardiac surgery. Two years later, he ascended to the role of chief of cardiac surgery, and in 1984, became chief of surgery for the next twenty years. Under his leadership the cardiac surgery program became the largest in the VA system and the first program in any specialty to be designated a program of excellence by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The affiliation of the West Roxbury VA and Harvard University was one of the first of its kind between a university and a VA hospital. This affiliation strengthened over the years, and when Shukri became chief of surgery, Dr. John Mannick, then chairman of surgery at the Brigham and Women's hospital, appointed him vice-chairman of the department, a position he maintained under the tenure of Dr. Michael Zinner. In 1987 Shukri rose to the rank of Professor of surgery at HMS.

Dr. Khuri was a master clinician, an inspiring teacher and mentor, a competent administrator and a prolific researcher and innovator. He was the consummate surgeon-scientist. The scope of his research interests was limitless, and his ability to attract very competent professionals from other disciplines to work harmoniously with him was exemplary.

With Dr Bob Kloner, then a cardiology fellow assigned by Dr. Eugene Braunwald to work in Shukri's laboratory, he developed the pH meter and showed that it could be used to monitor a reduction in pH as the first marker of myocardial ischemia. With Dr. Robert Valeri of the Naval Research Laboratory, he identified platelet dysfunction during cardiopulmonary bypass. With Dr. Joanne Ingwall at Harvard and Dr. Leo Nuringer at MIT, using nuclear magnetic spectroscopy, he studied changes in high-energy phosphates during myocardial ischemia. With his colleagues in the surgical research laboratory and Helmant Thatte PhD, he developed the GALA solution to preserve the endothelium of the saphenous vein before its use in coronary bypass, and the LAZARUS solution to resuscitate and preserve the donor heart before transplantation.

Dr. Khuri was a major contributor to the surgical package in DHCP (Decentralized Hospital Computer Program) which is now the most comprehensive electronic medical records system in the world. He also installed the first automated data management system in a surgical intensive care unit in the VA and in New England.

Shukri's crowning achievement came in 1994. Under his guidance as co-founder and chair, and with a large multidisciplinary team of collaborators including Dr. Jennifer Daly, now at Partners Health Care, the landmark NSQIP (National Surgical Quality Improvement Project) became a reality within the VA. This project was the first validated, outcome-based, risk adjusted, and peer controlled program for the measurement and improvement of the quality of surgical care. The NSQIP was adopted by the American College of Surgeons in 2001, and has now extended to over 215 hospitals in the private sector. Since its inception the 30-day postoperative mortality and morbidity within the VA have dropped by 47% and 43% respectively.

Shukri also had a loving family and a beautiful home. With Randa, his two daughters and son, they regularly hosted delicious dinners and social events to friends, colleagues, neighbors and guests. He was senior warden in his church, and with Randa, created a chapel devoted to peace in the Holy Land. He worked closely with his alma mater and served as president of the New England AUB Alumni Association. He worked ardently with many local groups to create and sustain dialogue between Israelis, Palestinians, and Jewish and Arab Americans to promote peace and justice throughout the world and especially in the Middle East.

He published over 380 peer reviewed articles, was a reviewer for several scientific journals, and served on the editorial board of the Journal of Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgery. He belonged to many professional organizations and served as president for three years of the Massachusetts Affiliate of the American Heart Association, and as vice-president of the American Surgical Association in 2005-2006.

He was the recipient of numerous prestigious honors and awards, all richly deserved, including the Paul Dudley White award of the American Heart Association, the 1998 Frank Brown Berry Prize, honoring an outstanding physician in the federal healthcare system, and posthumously, the Joint Commission's Ernest Amory Codman Award for outstanding contributions by an individual in performance measurement.

Dr. Khuri's scope of interests and activities was no less remarkable than his research. He was at ease discussing history, politics, philosophy, religion, music, theatre, arts, movies, and sports- truly a man for all seasons.

His courage, optimism, love of life and love of his work were vividly on display during his difficult battle with his illness. Even during radiation and chemotherapy treatments, he obsessed over his work, his plans for tomorrow and his next research project, while keeping his good humor, cheering his family and enjoying the music he loved. He was truly a profile in courage.

He was a humble man who, inspired by his deep Christian faith, was always kind and considerate with his colleagues and subordinates, yet relentless in his pursuit of excellence be it in photography, carpentry, or peace and justice for all his fellow human beings. His love for the beauty of life was infectious, and he was simply a wonderful person to be around. He was a brilliant researcher, yet a role model husband, father, grandfather, and mentor to over sixty residents and fellows. He cherished his work, but, more so, family and friendships as his extended loving family, and his many loyal friends and admirers will attest.

Dr. Khuri's initiatives and achievements improved the surgical service, the Boston VA medical center, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and American surgery. For all of his contributions and for Shukri the man, the memory of his work and his life will remain indelible.

Dr. John Mannick

Dr. Michael Zinner

Dr. Joseph Loscalzo

Dr. Kamal Itani

Dr. Ernest Barsamian, *Chairperson*