

Dr. James Ernest Cimino, 1928 - 2010

James Ernest Cimino died on February 11th, 2010 at his home in Valhalla, New York, after a protracted illness. Dr. Cimino is best known for his pioneering work on the arteriovenous (AV) fistula for artificial kidney (hemodialysis), the transformation of the House of Calvary nursing home to an internationally recognized model of a palliative care hospital, and the creation of the Palliative Care Institute at Calvary Hospital.

Dr. Cimino was born Giacomo Cimino in 1928 in Bronx, New York, to Ernest and Rose Cimino. After changing his name to "James" (although everyone called him "Jack") and attending Stuyvesant High School, he completed two years in the Forestry Program at Syracuse University, and then transferred to New York University to complete his undergraduate training. He then attended the New York University-Bellevue School of Medicine, where he met and married graduating nursing student Dorothy Naperkoski. They moved to Buffalo, New York in 1954, where Dr. Cimino completed an internship and residency in internal medicine at Memorial Hospital, and a fellowship in physiology at the University of Buffalo. While in Buffalo, they had the first three of their children. Dr. Cimino then enlisted in the United States Air Force and moved the family to Orlando, Florida, where he served for two years as the Chief of Medical Services, attaining the rank of Captain. The family then moved to Valhalla, New York, where Dr. Cimino opened a medical practice (with the professional assistance of his wife), and served in various capacities at the Bronx Veterans Administration (VA) Hospital, Calvary Hospital (also in the Bronx) and several local area hospitals, while adding three more children to the family.

It was 1967, while at the Bronx VA, Dr. Cimino led the team that pioneered the use of the AV to replace the complication-prone Scribner Shunt and become the best means for providing the necessary blood flow for hemodialysis patients. Today, 43 years since his landmark publication in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, the AV fistula remains the leading method for this purpose throughout the world.

Despite an extremely busy dialysis practice, Dr. Cimino realized that there was a greater need for his services at the House of Calvary, operated by the Dominican Sisters of the Sick Poor. He left his other positions to become Chief of Medicine, and later Medical Director at Calvary. Under his leadership, Calvary was transformed - first into Calvary Hospital, an accredited institution where terminal patients could die with dignity and later as a revolutionary new institution that has influenced the hospice movements in the United States and abroad. In 1994, he extended Calvary's mission to include the education of medical students and cancer care technicians by creating the Palliative Care Institute, where he served as director for a decade and continued to teach until shortly before his death.

Dr. Cimino has traveled extensively to teach his approaches to both vascular access and palliative care. His publication record extends over 50 years, with his most recent publication as a book chapter in a forthcoming compendium on the history of renal dialysis. Dr. Cimino has been honored in many ways throughout his life, for his work in

renal dialysis and in terminal cancer care. Organizations honoring him have included the Veterans Administration, the National Kidney Disease Foundation, the American College of Physicians (two Laureate awards), the American Dietetic Association, New York Medical College, the American Association of Kidney Patients, the Gold Humanism Honor Society, Alpha Omega Alpha, and the American Cancer Society. Most recently, he received the Scribner Trailblazer award from the International Society of Hemodialysis and the Belding H. Scribner Award from the American Society of Nephrology.

Dr. Cimino was loved and respected by all those who really knew him. He led by example in all aspects of his personal and professional lives. Through his works, he has extended the life and reduced the suffering hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of people throughout the world. Today, and in the future, patients suffering from terminal disease and those undergoing hemodialysis will benefit from Dr. Cimino's contributions to mankind. He died as he lived, quietly in his home, surrounded by his family, with dignity. He is survived by Dorothy, his wife and partner of 55 years, his sister Camilla Harris, his six children and their spouses, and his twelve grandchildren. Friends and family may call at Hawthorne Funeral Home in Hawthorne, New York on February 16th and 17th, from 2:00-4:00PM and 7:00-9:00PM. Memorial mass will be held at the Holy Name of Jesus Church in Valhalla, New York, on February 18th, at 10:00AM. In lieu of flowers, the family suggests that donations may be made to the James and Dorothy Cimino Endowment Fund at Calvary Hospital.