

IN MEMORIAM

David J. Krutchkoff, DDS, MS (1938–2019)

David J. Krutchkoff, DDS, MS, Professor Emeritus and founding head of the Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology Division of the Department of Oral Diagnosis at the University of Connecticut School of Dental Medicine, died on April 12, 2019, at home at age 80 years after a brave battle with cancer. He was born in Ferndale, California, on June 7, 1938, graduated from the University of California, Berkeley, with an AB in Zoology in 1960 and received his DDS from Washington University of St. Louis in 1964. After service in the U.S. Navy Dental Corps in San Diego, California, and Sasebo, Japan, Dr. Krutchkoff trained in Oral Pathology and Diagnosis initially at Washington University and then at the University of Michigan as the first graduate student of oral pathologist Dr. Nathaniel C. Rowe, whose challenging Socratic teaching style David perfected in his own career. In his own words, “How ingenious I thought to myself. He’s really not teaching us anything in a direct sense; more accurately, he’s requiring, perhaps better put, inspiring us to learn it on our own, and the discussion serves to clarify and emphasize things that we may not have gained from reading by itself.”

Dr. Krutchkoff began his academic career as Assistant Professor of Oral Pathology at the University of Louisville, Louisville, Kentucky in 1970. In 1973, he became Associate Professor of Oral Diagnosis and Oral Pathology at the University of Connecticut, where he would achieve the rank of Full Professor in the School of Dental Medicine and that of Associate Professor of Pathology in the School of Medicine. His successes at Connecticut included founding the Division of Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology, the Oral Pathology Biopsy Service, and the Oral Pathology Graduate Program. When he transitioned in 1996 to serve as an independent consultant in oral pathology to the University of Connecticut and to local hospitals, he continued to contribute to academics and teaching and eventually retired from practice in 2005. In the course of his career, Dr. Krutchkoff had published 92 scientific articles and had contributed 2 book chapters. In retirement, he coauthored with former student Dr. William Nordquist the provocative book *The Silent Saboteurs: Unmasking Our Own Oral Spirochetes as the Key to Saving Trillions in Healthcare Costs*, which was published in 2010, and also published his autobiography *Evolution of a Teacher* in 2014.



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Dr. Krutchkoff took a great deal of pride in his academic career at the University of Connecticut, where he successfully balanced his research, service, and teaching activities. His primary educational goal was to make Oral Pathology come to life in the minds of his students by convincing them that the subject matter could and should be put to work routinely and effectively in everyday dental practice. He consistently emphasized the importance of clinical application of the didactic knowledge he shared by using examples in the solution of common as well as uncommon diagnostic problems.

Dr. Krutchkoff seemed to be a complex man to most who interacted with him, but his core was driven by simple tenets of honesty, principle, discipline, humanism, and loyalty. His love of knowledge and controversy often led to stimulating conversations and teaching moments. Ever the doubter, requiring proof that pathologic observation is useful when it describes truth, Dr. Krutchkoff frequently stirred up controversy while striving to define useful diagnostic criteria for entities lacking diagnostic consistency. His endeavors were most notable in the diagnosis of lichenoid lesions and oral epithelial dysplasia, and his descriptions of

them were often published here in *O O O O*. His broader view of his role as an oral pathology educator and his compassionate interactions with patients even led him to explore the humanistic side of Oral Pathology with a unique publication in this journal, "Dying of cancer: a patient's recollection of her illness and her doctors."

As a dental student, I was familiar with these many faces of Dave Krutchkoff, who was seen as an intimidating teacher by those who were careless or unprepared. To me, as his first oral pathology graduate student, he was a nurturing and intellectually challenging mentor. Even after I broke to him the unexpected news after my first year of dental education that I was departing for medical school, I continued to enjoy the privilege of his life-long, supportive friendship.

Hundreds of his students and colleagues who profited from his professional knowledge and pursuit of

excellence in patient care live on as his legacy in their own individual and independent successful careers. To his family and friends, he was better known as an avid golfer, from the time of his varsity days at the University of California, Berkley; lover of jazz; traveler; wine connoisseur, loving father to his 3 children and grandfather to his 5 grandchildren; and kind husband to Sumiko, the love of his life. He will be missed.

Richard J. Zarbo, MD, DMD

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