

From the University of Mississippi Medical Center Division of Public Affairs

DR. A. WALLACE CONERLY, FORMER VICE CHANCELLOR FOR HEALTH AFFAIRS AT UMMC, DIES

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JACKSON, Miss. – Dr. A. Wallace Conerly, vice chancellor emeritus for health affairs at the University of Mississippi Medical Center and dean emeritus of the School of Medicine, died today in the UMMC hospital that bears his name. He was 76.

Conerly, who served as vice chancellor from 1994-2003, had been hospitalized early Tuesday at the Wallace Conerly Critical Care Hospital at the Medical Center for complications related to Parkinson's Disease. A memorial service will be scheduled for a later date.

Conerly's tenure at the Medical Center was marked by dramatic increases to the physical plant, expanded research, a more diverse student and faculty population, greater community involvement, increased endowment and increased national presence.

University of Mississippi Chancellor Dan Jones said Conerly used his medical, business, and political skills to the great benefit of all Mississippians. Prior to his appointment at Ole Miss, Jones served as vice chancellor for health affairs following Conerly's retirement.

"His leadership at the University of Mississippi Medical Center was transformative for the medical center and for health care in our state. I am personally grateful for his friendship and mentorship. He will be greatly missed," Jones said.

A native of Tylertown, Conerly graduated with honors from Millsaps College in 1957. He received the M.D. from Tulane University Medical School in 1960. After an internship in South Carolina, he served in the U.S. Air Force for six years where he was director of aerospace medicine at Moody Air Force Base in Georgia and director of base medical services at Vance Air Force Base in Oklahoma.

After military service, he returned to Mississippi where he practiced general medicine in Jackson from 1966 until he pursued specialty training and a career in academic medicine. He went to Ochsner's in New Orleans for a cardiology fellowship, came to the Medical Center in 1971 as a resident in internal medicine and from 1972 until 1974, he was the Mississippi Lung Association Fellow in Pulmonary Diseases. He joined the UMMC faculty in 1973.

Conerly held a variety of administrative positions including director of continuing education, director of respiratory care and medical director of the intensive care unit. When the Medical Center, under the leadership of Dr. Norman C. Nelson, embarked on the largest expansion project in the history of state higher education, Nelson asked Conerly, his assistant vice chancellor, to take charge of each of the building projects. The Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning appointed Conerly vice chancellor at the retirement of Nelson in 1994.

Dr. James Keeton, vice chancellor for health affairs, said the word "legend" best describes Conerly.

"He put us onto the path of the 21st century when you consider the facilities we have now and our accomplishments in education, research, and health care in this state. He was a personal mentor and advisor of mine, which I greatly appreciated," he said.

Conerly has received numerous awards and accolades. The American College of Chest Physicians recognized Conerly's pivotal role in the creation of the Jackson Medical Mall in 2002 with its prestigious Governor's Award for Community Service.

Conerly served a three-year term as the American College of Chest Physicians' commissioner on the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs. He is a former examiner and member of the Board of Trustees for the National Board for Respiratory Care and has served on the Mississippi State Medical Association Council on Medical Education. He also served a four-year term on the Board of Regents of the National Library of Medicine, the first Mississippian ever to do so.

In 2003 Conerly received the Distinguished Citizen Award from The Andrew Jackson Council, Boy Scouts of America.

In recognition of his many contributions to Mississippi, former Gov. Ronnie Musgrove declared March 19, 2003, "Wally Conerly Day in Mississippi" and each house of the state legislature held a special ceremony and adopted a resolution in his honor. In 2009, former Gov. Haley Barbour also honored Conerly with a Medal of Service for a lifetime of significant contributions to the state.

Conerly, who lived in Terry, is survived by his wife, the former Frances Bryan of West Point, and two sons, Al and his wife Rhonda, and Charlie and his wife Lynn and their two children, Chase and Anne Marie.

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Please forward this message to colleagues who might be interested. If you wish to be removed from this list or know of a colleague to add, send an e-mail message to: LAGriffin@umc.edu.

The University of Mississippi Medical Center, located in Jackson, is the state's only academic medical center. University of Mississippi Health Care represents the clinical programs of the Medical Center and includes University Hospitals and Health System and University Physicians, the faculty group practice. UMMC encompasses five health science schools, including medicine, nursing, health related professions, dentistry and graduate studies, as well as the site where University of Mississippi pharmacy students do their clinical training. The Medical Center's threefold mission is to educate tomorrow's health-care professionals, conduct innovative research to improve human health, and to provide the highest quality care available to the state's citizens. A major goal of the Medical Center is the improvement of the health of Mississippians and the elimination of health disparities. For more information, contact the Division of Public Affairs at 601-984-1100 or visit us on the Web at <http://publicaffairs.umc.edu/>