



Obituary for Professor James O. Johnston, MD

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On April 27, 2023, the International Skeletal Society (ISS) lost one of their heroes. Professor Jim Johnston, MD, was a larger-than-life Orthopedic Surgeon and Educator, who shaped our entire world view on Orthopedic Surgeons. We will not forget his generosity as a teacher, his brilliance as a surgeon and researcher, and most of all his kindness. A member of the ISS since 1989, he stimulated many of his Radiology co-workers to present his interesting cases at our ISS Radiology/Pathology meetings and he appreciated learning from the ISS members during those sessions. He particularly enjoyed the more recent ISS meetings in Hawaii and Paris. Dr. Johnston leaves behind a legacy of excellence in orthopedic education, research, and practice.

Jim Johnston, MD, went to Medical School and completed his residency in Orthopedic Surgery at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. He was Chief of Orthopedics at Kaiser Permanente, Oakland, California, before he joined the faculty at UCSF's Department of Orthopedic Surgery in 1967 and then rose through the ranks from Assistant to Full Professor of Clinical Orthopedics. As Professor Emeritus he joined the Musculoskeletal Oncology Service at Kaiser Permanente Medical Center, South San Francisco. It should be noted that since 1991 Jim was also a Professor of Clinical Radiology at UCSF.

The orthopedic surgeon

During his tenure at UCSF and as Chief of Orthopedics at Kaiser Permanente Medical Center, Jim was a pioneer in the field of Orthopedic Oncology and developed numerous foundational innovations and techniques. He was an expert in design and application of tumor prostheses. His expertise also included limb-sparing technology in the management

of primary sarcomas of the extremities and he was very knowledgeable in all aspect of tumor imaging. Given his vast experience in orthopedic tumor surgery he served as Visiting Professor multiple times and was an invited lecturer at many meetings.

The educator

Jim's accolades and awards for his teaching were manifold. We would like to highlight two teaching awards that he received: the 2014 Distinguished Clinician Educator Award by the American Orthopedic Association and the 2006 Award for Excellence in Teaching from the Department of Radiology at UCSF. National and international faculty and trainees praised his teaching, and he developed an expansive case collection/atlas of thousands of cases which he freely shared with his colleagues. We fondly remember his weekly teaching sessions at UCSF where he brought exciting cases and discussed challenging diagnoses and findings, which we still share with our trainees today.

The researcher

Jim developed novel surgical techniques and implants. His research covered all aspects of tumor surgery, including functional and clinical outcomes of limb-sparing therapy for pediatric extremity sarcomas, tumor prostheses, and lower limb surgery for osteogenic sarcoma of bone. He also collaborated with the UCSF radiologists on novel MR imaging methods to monitor neovascularity as an indicator of response to chemotherapy in osteogenic and Ewing sarcoma. Overall, he first and co-authored more than 100 publications and many book chapters.

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The donor

As a visionary Jim invested in his profession; the annual UCSF and Kaiser James O. Johnston teaching awards, as well as Kaiser's JOJ Orthopedic Symposium, demonstrate his continued impact on teaching, research, and clinical excellence. Moreover, Jim and his wife, MaryBee, were staunch and generous supporters of UCSF Orthopedics and established the James O. Johnston Endowed Chair for Education. A strong proponent of immunotherapy for treating cancer, they have also established a foundation to support and advance this research.

The husband

Jim Johnston was a loving husband to MaryBee Johnston, his wife for 39 years. In his later years, he and MaryBee enjoyed playing golf and socializing with friends at their homes in California and on the Big Island of Hawaii (Fig. 1).

The International Skeletal Society will dearly miss Dr. Johnston, the brilliant, charismatic, generous, and kind orthopedic surgeon, who inspired us and who was also a true friend. We will forever remember him, and his legacy will live on.

We send sincere condolences to his wife MaryBee, family, friends, and colleagues.

Donations in Dr. Johnston's memory can be made to

The James O Johnston Endowed Chair in Orthopaedics Surgery Education and Research at UCSF.

Checks should be addressed to UCSF Foundation with written memo notation "Johnston Endowed Chair" and mailed to UCSF Foundation, Atten: Darrell Young, P.O. Box 45339, San Francisco, CA 94145, USA

For any other questions, please reach out to Darrell Young at darrell.young@ucsf.edu



Fig. 1 Dr. James O. Johnston and his wife MaryBee

Declarations

Informed consent Written consent to publish this obituary was obtained from MaryBee Johnston.

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