

In memoriam: Edward Arthur (Ed) Schuck (1939–2016), a Sleep Medicine “early adopter”

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On Saturday, April 2, 2016, Edward Arthur (Ed) Schuck (born 1939) died of complications from therapy for his lung transplant 12 years previously [1]. He was a major personal supporter of sleep medicine from its beginnings. In the 1980s, he founded EdenTec, which manufactured one of the early portable (type III) sleep monitors. Ed had recognized the need for research as a foundation for the new specialty. His vision for sleep apnea field tests that are simple, accessible, and reliable was clearly ahead of the pack. Ed developed equipment that enabled some of the first epidemiological studies of sleep apnea in the USA (Cleveland Family Study) and provided a foundation for conducting the large-scale polysomnographic studies we have today. Over 20 years ago, the EdenTec at home and its paper printouts permitted a modest-scale, cost-effective tool for field studies, and data from the Cleveland Family Study are archived in national consortium databases currently used for identifying genetic variants for sleep apnea. He provided business expertise and tools for the early clinical use of “home testing” (“the Massachusetts Model”); when

this initiative came under heavy criticism, he worked tirelessly to build bridges to and from the sleep community.

His passion transcended his business interests. He introduced industry competitors to clinical sleep investigators with whom they might develop synergy. He would seek out young international investigators and supported “sabbaticals” to US centers to burnish their research skills. One outcome of such a sabbatical was the Berlin Questionnaire. Ed continued to be a sounding board for those who went on to become “established”. “What are you doing now?” was a question not asked for politeness, but which led to a Socratic discourse on current work and what the field could be. Diabetes, hypertension, CVD, etc. were issues brought up in the 1990s, and discussions included genetic risk and hypoxia consequences. After “retiring” from business because of his transplant, he then became an active board member for Inspire Medical Systems. He responded with enthusiasm to the development of patient networks, being a Founding Industry member of the American Sleep Apnea Association in 1991. He was instrumental in getting bigger companies to commit to a patient-oriented group. More recently, he joined the Sleep Apnea Patient Centered Outcomes Network Advisory Council (myapnea.org) where he challenged patient and researcher partners to think deeply about strategy and provided insights on how to use business planning methods in the advocacy for patients.

In his late 50s (~16 years ago), he was discovered to have alpha-1 antitrypsin deficiency. He underwent a lung transplant at age 63 and was one of the longest living lung recipients at the University of Minnesota. After his diagnosis, he became highly active in the Alpha-1 Foundation and became its chairman. He was a leading member of the advisory board for the Center for Lung Science and Health at the University of Minnesota, his alma mater. Ed contributed to his community, chairing the Eden Prairie Planning Commission for many

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years and working on campaigns, political and otherwise, in Eden Prairie and Wayzata, Minnesota. More importantly, “Ed never met a river he didn’t like” and fly-fished in most of them. A world traveler with his wife Judy, Ed was a collector of antique boats in need of restoration, and older fishing equipment. He had two daughters, a son, and four grandchildren. His family was the foundation for his energy and enthusiasm.

We all personally benefited through academic support from Ed. But it was his presence, enthusiasm, and friendship that initiated and sustained our interactions over time. We looked forward to meetings and to seeing him informally so that at

any event (industry, patient advocate, entrepreneurship, ATS Assembly meetings, etc.), conversations were not limited to “the business” but to the personal impact of our work on our lives and success of our families and colleagues. For those who knew Ed, and even those who may not have been directly touched by Ed, he will be missed.

References

1. <http://www.startribune.com/obituaries/detail/131010/?fullname=edward-arthur-schuck>