



**Medical Community Mourns Loss of Supporter in Kennedy  
Doctors, Researchers Remember Kennedy as a Champion for Medical Research**

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Dr. George Daley, by his own admission, was "a little-known scientist" working on a cutting-edge field of medicine in 1998 when he met the political powerhouse who would soon become one of the staunchest governmental supporters of his work.

The new field was embryonic stem cell research. And the politician was Sen. Ted Kennedy. The publication of research on the first-ever embryonic stem cell line derived from humans piqued Kennedy's interest in the issue.

"I had personally been working on embryonic stem cells for some years, and there actually were relatively few people working on it at the time," said Daley, who was then part of the Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research in Cambridge, Mass. "So when Kennedy's office called, I was the one to answer the questions.

"The next thing you know, I'm speaking to the entire Democratic Senate caucus at their weekly policy luncheon at the Capitol, seated between [Tom] Daschle and [Harry] Reid and eating the famed bean soup."

Daley is now the director of Pediatric Stem Cell Transplantation at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in Boston and one of the country's leading stem cell researchers. But he said that his first few meetings with Kennedy were a humbling experience.

"You're dealing with a legend," he said. "He was obviously larger than life, but he was a very direct and personable individual. He always went out of his way to make me feel that I was important."

Daley is just one of many medical researchers who had the opportunity not only to work with Kennedy in their professional capacities, but also to relate to him on a personal level. Their anecdotes paint a picture of a man who showed great interest in both science and the policies that guided its use and exploration.

**Kennedy Lent Support to Health Advocacy**

While Kennedy's support of medical issues may be eclipsed by his more high-profile crusade for health care reform, the areas of research that Kennedy championed during his 47-year political career were numerous, with some more well-known than others.

"I think it is fair to say that Senator Kennedy did more to advance the care of cancer patients and promote cancer research than any legislator in American history. It is a huge and profound part of his legacy," said Dr. Harold Burstein, an oncologist at Harvard's Dana-Farber Cancer Institute.

In a statement from the American Cancer Society, CEO Dr. John Seffrin said, "Truly one of the great champions in this battle to fight cancer, Senator Kennedy has led a passionate effort against this disease during his more than 40 years in the U.S. Senate, championing health care-related causes from equal access to health care to increased funding for cancer research and screening for early detection."

Among these high-profile conditions, however, were other, less prominent causes that Kennedy championed \_ including treatment for mental health issues and substance abuse.

"When I met with Senator Kennedy, we were most likely to discuss mental health care or psychiatric research," said **Dr. Bruce Cohen**, president and psychiatrist-in-chief emeritus of **McLean Hospital** in Belmont, Mass.

"He understood that providing mental health coverage was essential for overall health, and it is to him more than any other, that we owe parity in coverage for psychiatric illnesses," Cohen said. "He also knew that the status quo was not acceptable, we not only had to provide better and more comprehensive care, we had to discover new and improved ways to treat people."

Dr. Mary Jeanne Kreek, professor and head of the Laboratory of Biology of Addictive Diseases at Rockefeller University in New York, has her own personal story of Kennedy's interest in substance abuse issues.

"I was first contacted by Senator Kennedy's senior aide on a Saturday afternoon in September of 1989. I was asked to come to Washington, D.C., to advise the Senator and his staff on addiction treatment and the role it should play in health care legislation," she recalled. Over a dinner meeting with Kennedy and his staffers, she said one exchange with the Senator was particularly memorable.

### **Kennedy Backed Numerous Health Causes**

"Midway through our conversation, he stopped me and asked, 'Mary Jeanne, do you mean that treatment of addictions must be included in health care coverage?' I said, 'Yes, Senator, they are all one. Addictions are chronic diseases.' And he said, 'Thank you, Mary Jeanne.'"

She said that exchange began a years-long dialogue with Kennedy on the issue of including addiction treatment in health care legislation. She added that legislation aside, Kennedy also personally saw to the development at least one methadone maintenance program on Cape Cod.

And Dr. Steve Nissen, chairman of the Department of Cardiovascular Medicine at the Cleveland Clinic Foundation, worked with Kennedy's office on landmark FDA legislation that introduced drug safety reforms. He said that Kennedy's well-known penchant for finding common ground made its way into his dealing on health issues as well.

"Senator Kennedy, with his extraordinary talent for forging bipartisan compromise, co-authored this legislation with conservative Republican Michael Enzi," Nissen said. "Amazingly, this bill achieved a very high level of bipartisan support, which was a tribute to Senator Kennedy's efforts. At the time, I argued for more aggressive reforms, but Senator Kennedy felt that a bipartisan bill was important and he found common ground."

It was this talent for seeking out consensus on health issues that Mark M. Rasenick, a professor at the University of Illinois College of Medicine and a member of Kennedy's health staff from 1999-2000.

"Senator Kennedy was a sailor and was comfortable with the idea of tacking several times in order to arrive at his destination," Rasenick said. "This included working with those holding decidedly different views -- I worked on a Kennedy-Helms bill to mandate colon cancer screening -- as long as they were concordant on the relevant issue."

### **Kennedy's Last Battle**

Kennedy continued to push forward on his health care reform goals, even as he fought another, more personal health battle of his own. Dr. Mitchel Berger, chairman of the Department of Neurological Surgery at the University of California San Francisco, witnessed some of this battle firsthand.

"I am personally very saddened by the loss of Senator Kennedy. In my view, he was a true American hero who fought fiercely for the rights of all Americans to have decent and good quality health care. As a physician, this is what I admired about him the most. Yet, as a physician who consulted on his case, to help advise him and his family how to battle this disease, I admired him for his tenacity in dealing with the situation and wanting to do everything possible to defeat the tumor that eventually took his life."

Dr. Sam Gandy, professor of Alzheimer's disease research at Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York City, said that Kennedy's legacy in supporting medical research will echo long after his death.

"On DNA research, in vitro fertilization, fetal tissue research, and most recently, stem cell research, 'Teddy' was always there," he said. "In each of these debates, Senator Kennedy held steadfast to principles and goals famously set out by his brother, the late President Jack Kennedy."

"In the same way that Jack Kennedy took us to the moon and beyond, Teddy led us inward, to the cells, genes, and DNA that hold the keys to ourselves and our maladies. We in science and research -- especially in these very lean years for the NIH -- already miss his ability to engage legislators and laypeople and move these debates forward."

Those in the medical field whose lives he touched will remember him as well.

"He was always helpful. He always made things happen," Cohen said. "Sometimes, I wear a Kennedy campaign hat around town. I do so proudly and always will."