Remembering Dr. Wadie Najm

Roger F. Steinert, MD, Interim Dean, UC Irvine Health School of Medicine

Dear Colleagues,

It is with great sadness that I tell you of the passing of Wadie Najm, MD. UC Irvine Health has lost one of its most respected and caring physicians. A pioneer in clinical education and particularly integrative medicine, Dr. Najm was a mentor, role model and humanitarian—respected by his colleagues, residents, students, and perhaps most of all, his patients.

A memorial service for Dr. Najm will take place on Sunday, Sept. 28 at 1 p.m., at O’Connor Mortuary, 25301 Alicia Parkway, Laguna Hills, Calif. 92653.

A Lifetime of Service and Compassion

Dr. Najm received his bachelor’s degree at the Universite Libre de Bruxelles, in Brussels, Belgium, in 1978, followed by his medical degree at the same institution in 1984. He came to the United States and UC Irvine in 1985 where he began his advanced medical education training. He completed a year in research in the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation and Geriatrics, followed by a clinical fellowship at Whittier Hospital, residency in family medicine at USC and a geriatrics fellowship at UC Irvine. In 1994 he was appointed as an assistant professor in the Department of Family Medicine and subsequently advanced to clinical professor in 2004.

Over the course of his career, Dr. Najm held a number of administrative positions in the department, including associate residency director and director of predoctoral education. An avid learner, he also completed a masters degree in education from USC in 2005. Dr. Najm was a fellow of the American Academy of Family Medicine and a fellow of the American Academy of Nutrition.

Year after year, he was honored as one of the best doctors at UC Irvine. In 2004 and 2005, he received the Excellence in Teaching Award from the School of Medicine. He was recognized as a physician of excellence every year between 2007 and 2010, followed by election as one of the Best Doctors in America in 2010 and 2011. In 2012, he was cited as one of Southern California’s Top Doctors. Clinical excellence as well as top administrative and interactive skills led to Dr. Najm’s appointment in 2012 as associate dean of academic affairs to provide development and oversight of the clinical educator series in the School of Medicine.

Dr. Najm published extensively on geriatrics and integrative medicine—beginning in 1995 with a study on bacteremia in the elderly, and extending through 2012 with his observations on importance of the Mediterranean-style, low-glycemic diet in patients with metabolic
syndrome. His research was funded by grants from the Reynolds Foundation, the Samuei Institute and industry. These lifelong interests led to early collaborations with the Susan Samuei Center for Integrative Medicine, initially as director of its continuing education conferences and then as medical director of the center’s integrative medicine clinic.

In his role as medical director of the Susan Samuei Center for Integrative Medicine, Dr. Najm provided important oversight of clinic development and faculty recruitment as the center evolved. His vision was to create truly integrative center composed of Western physicians with expertise in allopatic and integrative medical approaches, as well as allied care specialists in naturopathy, acupuncture, supplements and massage therapy. He oversaw development from a single part-time clinic in Gottschalk Medical Plaza to a well-defined clinic expansion comprising more than 6,000 feet of space. Along the way, he was instrumental in transitioning the Samuei Center the Executive Health Program, a medical wellness and risk factor identification program for more than 130 companies in Southern California. Throughout this period of growth, Dr. Najm’s mantra was to promote evidence-based medical approaches to achieve healthy and productive lives.

Each of his accomplishments was carried out in a low-key, soft-spoken style for which he was so well known. We will miss his quiet insights and words of wisdom.

Dr. Najm was a wonderful human being who touched so many lives and will be sorely missed. I consider myself fortunate to have known him.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in his honor to the Wadie Najm Fund for Education in Integrative Medicine.

Please join me in offering our condolences to his family during this difficult time.

Sincerely,

Roger F. Steinert, MD
Interim Dean
UC Irvine Health School of Medicine