In Memoriam: Frank A. Rubino, MD

F rank August Rubino, MD, was well known among the neurology community for his passion for excellence in clinical neurology and teaching. Dr Rubino died at age 73 years on March 19, 2006. Dr Rubino's interest was in general neurology, especially the hospital practice of neurology, with special interests in movement disorders and cerebrovascular disease. Dr Rubino was very actively involved in teaching clinical neurology, not only to neurology residents but also to residents in internal medicine, family practice, and other specialties.

Dr Rubino's parents emphasized the significance of education to him, his 3 sisters, and his brother.1 His father had originally emigrated from Italy. Dr Rubino obtained his undergraduate degree from Bradley University in Peoria, Illinois, where he graduated magna cum laude in 1955 with a bachelor of science degree in mathematics and chemistry. He was then drafted into the US Army and sent to Fort Sam Houston in Houston, Texas. His interest in medicine was cultivated by the pathologist COL Ivey. Dr Rubino later attended medical school at the University of Illinois in 1962 with Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Medical Society distinction. One interesting fact is that Dr Rubino actually completed 2 residencies, the first in psychiatry (Illinois State Psychiatric Institute) and later another in neurology (Northwestern University), and he was board certified in both specialties. His passion was the brain and neurology, and he practiced neurology exclusively throughout his career. However, those who knew Dr Rubino were always amazed by his deep wisdom about patient care in general, his unwavering compassion for and dedication to his patients. He would return to the Edward Hines Jr VA Hospital in Hines, Illinois, where he served as the chief neurologist from 1969 to 1971. His passion was teaching, particularly teaching residents. In 1985 he joined the US Army Reserve, where he rose to lieutenant colonel. Dr Rubino joined the faculty in the Department of Neurology at Loyola University Stritch School of Medicine in 1970 and rose to professor of neurology and acting chairman in 1982. He later served as the director of the Hines/Loyola Neurology Residency Training Program from 1978 to 1989. Dr Rubino trained several personnel at the Veterans Affairs hospital who would later work at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. Later, it was Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville, Florida, that recruited Dr Rubino. As proof of his passion for lifelong teaching, Dr Rubino started a neurology residency at Mayo Clinic in Florida as the co–program director in 2000 along with David J. Capobianco, MD.

Dr Rubino was also well known for his passion for teaching medical students, residents, and fellows. He received numerous teaching awards during his career, including an award bearing his name at the Department of Neurology at Loyola University from 1990 to the present as well as at Mayo Clinic in Florida from 2005 to the present. Dr Rubino received the Distinguished Educator Award in 1997 from the Mayo Clinic Foundation, which is their highest award for an educator, and he received the American Academy of Neurology Teacher of the Year Award in 2003. Dr Rubino published numerous peer-reviewed articles and book chapters on general neurological subjects such as gait disorders and diabetic amyotrophy, which later became known as diabetic/nondiabetic polyradiculopathy/plexopathy.

Dr Rubino will perhaps be best known among those who trained at Loyola University for co–mentorship of the Saturday Morning Conference in which a patient's case was discussed in detail in terms of history and physical examination, including careful localization, differential diagnoses, and etiologic pathogenesis. Dr Rubino and Sudhansu Chokroverty, MD, were both instrumental in this conference, which gained regional and later national notoriety for its unique and fundamental quality in education. The lineage of neurology residents trained during that time includes Paul W. Brazis, MD, Joseph C. Masdeu, MD, PhD, and Jose Biller, MD, who would immortalize the teachings of his Saturday morning live patient examinations and localization into the textbook Localization in Clinical Neurology.2

In 1989, Dr Rubino was recruited by Dr Brazis to come to Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville to join the Department of Neurology, start a neurology residency, and effectively work as the institution's first neurohospitalist. Dr Rubino had an unparalleled compassion and respect for his patients and a simultaneous passion for teaching the trainees around him. For everyone who knew him, Dr Rubino represented the “neurologist’s neurologist,” or a master neurology clinician on whom other neurology colleagues often called for complex or unexplained diagnoses. Dr Rubino also excelled as a general neurologist at both the hospital and the clinic. Dr Rubino was well known for his tireless commitment to his patients and to teaching trainees. Dr Rubino was a silent giant among neurology educators, which is evidenced by his achievement of named education awards at 2 different academic institutions, Loyola University and Mayo Clinic.
Dr Rubino is survived by his 2 daughters, who are both nurses; 2 granddaughters; and the scores of neurologists he trained. Therefore, nearly 10 years after his death, we, his disciples, remember Dr Frank A. Rubino. We remember how he taught the vital importance of clinical neurology and the sacred relationship between the patient and the physician. We remember his unrivaled professionalism, his work ethic, his unparalleled passion for teaching (and at all hours), and his emphasis on the art of medicine—not to be lost in the digital “ePatient” age.


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