

Richard E. Kerber, MD, 1939–2016

David Gutterman, MD; Allyn Mark, MD

On November 8, 2016, the greater medical community lost a visionary scientist, master clinician, a thought-leader in echocardiography, and a pioneer in cardiac resuscitation. Richard E. Kerber will also be remembered as an accomplished clarinetist, opera aficionado, and avid bicyclist. He may be most remembered by the scores of cardiology trainees he mentored over his 20-year tenure as program director at the University of Iowa.

Dick began his life and career in New York. After graduating magna cum laude from Columbia University in anthropology, he matriculated in NYU medical school, later completing internship and residency at Bellevue. Dick served in the Army Medical Corps in Vietnam where he received a Bronze Star. Years later, as a veteran he had especially close rapport with the patients he served at the VA hospital in Iowa City. After his tour of duty, Dick pursued a cardiology fellowship at Stanford where he published a classic *New England Journal of Medicine* paper on mitral valve prolapse.

Dick together with his wife, Linda, a distinguished historian, moved to the University of Iowa in 1971 where he spent the remainder of his notable career. Dick introduced echocardiography to the University of Iowa and quickly emerged as a national leader in clinical echocardiography and in using echo as a research tool to assess cardiac function in experimental animal models of myocardial infarction. He served from 1997–1999 as President of the American Society of Echocardiography, which in his memory has established the Richard E. Kerber lectureship in medical ethics, to be presented annually at their national scientific sessions.

An appointment as director of the University of Iowa's CPR program kindled in Dick a scientific interest in mechanisms of defibrillation. He went on to conduct pioneering studies that



have informed current-day protocols for external cardiac defibrillation including voltage dosing, timing of current delivery, electrode placement, and impulse waveforms. Dick provided national leadership in cardiac resuscitation by helping establish and later chairing the American Heart Association's Emergency Cardiovascular Care Committee. He also provided critical input for over a decade to the International Liaison Committee on Resuscitation, the global clearinghouse for coordination of organizations responsible for overseeing resuscitative medicine from discovery science to clinical guidelines.

Dick was director of an extraordinarily successful academic Cardiology Fellowship Program. For 2 decades he selected and groomed a huge cadre of outstanding academic and private cardiologists. Dick was a unique type of mentor. He was the program director for one of the authors (D.G.) who explained that "in medicine, your program director is typically imprinted in your memory as a parent-like authority figure, but my relationship with Dick was much richer than that. He was able to transition seamlessly among his roles as a mentor, friend, and confidante. This combination of enriching social and professional interactions highlights one of the characteristics I most admired about Dick."

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Dick's interests and talents extended beyond medicine to sports, music, literature, and art. Dick was an enthusiastic bicyclist who rode many times with friends and family on RAGBRAI, the Des Moines Register's Annual Great Bike Ride Across Iowa. He was an accomplished clarinetist who played in several orchestras and chamber groups. In a tribute to Dick in Iowa City, Dale Abel identified a harmonization between Dick's vocation and avocation through his mastery of sound waves. Dick harnessed high-frequency waves to noninvasively probe dynamic cardiovascular function and anatomy. He was also adept at generating lower frequency waves through the vibrating reed of a clarinet to provide compelling harmony as part of a chamber quartet. In 1999 Dick tied it all together as

the Edler Lecturer of the American Society of Echocardiography with an unforgettable talk entitled "Deconstructing the Body: Medical Imaging, Medical Art and the Art of Medicine." This symmetry between echocardiography, music, and the arts was more than coincidence for Dick Kerber. It was a harmonization of his passions.

Dick had the magnetic qualities of character, intellect, and compassion with a refined moral compass and a perspective of how medicine fits into the broader world. His excellence as a researcher was paralleled by outstanding clinical acumen and a captivatingly engaged teaching style. He was and remains an extraordinary role model and a mensch.



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