

## OBITUARY

Cyril H. Wecht, M.D., J.D.

### In Memoriam: James G. Zimmerly, M.D., J.D.

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James Zimmerly attained his M.D. in 1966 from the University of Maryland School of Medicine, his J.D. in 1969 from the University of Maryland School of Law, and his M.P.H. in 1969 from John Hopkins University. He also received an honorary LL.M. from his alma mater, Gannon University, in 2000. For almost 20 years, Dr. Zimmerly, an emergency room physician, had split his evening and weekend time between the Washington County Hospital Trauma Center in Hagerstown and Dorchester General Hospital in Cambridge, Maryland.

Since 1973, Jim had taught at the Georgetown University Law Center and had been on the faculty in the Department of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine at the University of Maryland since 1972. He had lectured in more than 40 states and 25 countries and served as a consultant to the Departments of Defense and Health and Human Services, and to the Veterans Administration. Jim was a past President of the American College of Legal Medicine, a former editor of the *Maryland Medical Journal* and, most recently, was serving as President and Chair of the Baltimore RH Typing Laboratory. Jim was a Fellow of the AAFS and attended annual meetings on a regular basis as an active member of the Jurisprudence Section. Over the span of his career, Jim had authored over 700 medical and legal articles in professional journals throughout the country.

Despite his quiet and unassuming demeanor, Dr. Zimmerly's curriculum vitae runs over 80 pages. Early in his military career with the United States Army's Medical Corps, Jim co-developed a meningococcal meningitis vaccine, voluntarily injecting himself first to ensure its safety and determine its efficacy, and later personally administering the vaccine to 30,000 volunteers in high-risk locations. Jim and his colleagues first reported the results of their extensive field trials with the vaccine in the *New England Journal of Medicine*. An editorial in the journal lauded the vaccine as another "Giant Leap for Mankind." The vaccine has now been administered to every U.S. military recruit since 1970. In 1974, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration licensed the vaccine for use in civilians, and it is often administered to civilians who travel abroad.

While serving in the U.S. Army, Jim achieved the rank of colonel by age 36, becoming the youngest full colonel in the U.S.

military. He traveled throughout South Vietnam and Cambodia, serving two tours of duty, during which time he was responsible for tracking infectious diseases and ensuring that troops were properly protected against diseases such as malaria, hepatitis, and tuberculosis. After serving in Vietnam, Jim returned to the United States with meritorious honors including the Bronze Star medal and Humanitarian Service Medal.

Combining his medical and legal educational backgrounds, the U. S. Government appointed Dr. Zimmerly as Chief of Legal Medicine at the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology in Washington, D.C. As head of that department from 1971 to 1991, he worked on medical-legal cases for all the military branches and other federal agencies employing health care providers. In those 20 years, he reviewed and supervised the handling of more than 8,000 malpractice cases. During this 20-year period, Jim often collaborated with the forensic pathologists at the AFIP in the investigation and analysis of numerous death cases. His most recent position as the Medical Director of Monumental Life in Baltimore, one of the largest life insurance companies in the world, afforded him a similar opportunity to utilize his outstanding abilities as a physician, attorney, and administrator.

Jim was an accomplished sportsman as well, traveling around the world to hunt and fish with his family and friends. He hunted brown bear in Russia and caribou in Canada, alligator in the south, elk in the west, and fished throughout North and Central America as well as the Pacific, Atlantic, and Indian Oceans. The highlights of those travels were probably his South Africa safaris in 2000 and 2002, during which he chased plains game with his sons Mark and Scott, and several friends.

Dr. Zimmerly is survived by his wife Johanna and his three children, Mark, Scott, and Robin.

Cyril H. Wecht, M.D., J.D.  
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