

# Edward J. Stemmler, Medicine

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*Edward Stemmler*

Edward Joseph Stemmler, the Robert G. Dunlop Professor of Medicine and the Perelman School of Medicine's former executive vice president and dean, died on January 3, 2023. He was 93.

Born in Philadelphia, Dr. Stemmler earned a BA from La Salle College in 1950, then served at the rank of Sergeant First-Class with the 401st Chemical Service Intelligence Detachment in Korea. He returned from the military in 1953 and worked with his father for three years at an auto parts store. In 1956, he entered the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine. He graduated in 1960 and completed an internship and residency in medicine and a fellowship in cardiology at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania, then a post-doctoral NIH fellowship in pulmonary physiology in Penn's department of physiology. Penn brought him onto its faculty in 1964 as an instructor in medicine; he advanced to the rank of professor in 1974. In 1981 he was named the first incumbent of the Robert G. Dunlop Professorship in Medicine.

During an illustrious career at Penn, Dr. Stemmler assumed many administrative responsibilities. He served for two years as the chief of the medical outpatient department of HUP and for six years as chief of medicine of the University Medical Service at the VA Hospital in Philadelphia, a service that he established in 1966. He served as associate dean of HUP in 1973 and associate dean for student affairs at Penn's School of Medicine from 1973-75. In 1974, the school appointed him its acting dean, and he became dean proper a year later (*Almanac* January 14, 1975 (<https://almanac.upenn.edu/archive/v21/pdf/n17/011475.pdf>)). During his tenure as dean, Dr. Stemmler led the establishment of the clinical practices of the University of Pennsylvania and the clinician-educator faculty track. He led the development of academic and institutional planning systems, which helped the School of Medicine prosper. He championed biomedical research, which grew in scope during his tenure, and supported the construction and modernization of academic, research, and clinical facilities for the school.

Dr. Stemmler served as dean until 1987, when he resigned to assume the role of executive vice president, charged to create a new entity, the University of Pennsylvania Medical Center (*Almanac* September 8, 1987 (<https://almanac.upenn.edu/archive/v34/pdf/n03/090887.pdf>)). "It is my belief that the School of Medicine requires the personal attention of the individual who serves in the role of dean," Dr. Stemmler said. "After serving in this position for so many years, I firmly believe that a strong dean, unfettered by other responsibilities, is essential for the future growth and vitality of our great institution." He served as the head of the center until 1989, when he was named dean emeritus. He retired from Penn in 1990, assuming the position of executive vice president of the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) in Washington, DC. At the AAMC, he chaired the assembly and won a Distinguished Service Membership. He retired from the AAMC in 1994.

Dr. Stemmler engaged in extensive professional and community activities. He served as a member of the national advisory committee to the Robert Wood Johnson Clinical Scholars Program. He was chairman of the board of the National Board of Medical Examiners, where he was named a Distinguished Service Member. Dr. Stemmler also served on the boards of the Rhone-Poulenc Rorer Pharmaceutical Company, the Dorothy Rider Pool Health Care Trust, the SAW Community Foundation, Ursinus College (where he also was a trustee), the University of California Medical Center, Davis, and the Medical Center of the University of Virginia. He was a treasurer emeritus of the American College of Physicians, a member of the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Science, and a past president and member of the American Clinical and Climatological Association. He received honorary degrees from Ursinus College, La Salle University, Rush University, Philadelphia College of Pharmacy and Science, the Medical College of Pennsylvania, the State University of New York at Syracuse, and Georgetown University. A painting of Dr. Stemmler hangs in the ground floor of his namesake Stemmler Hall at Penn.

Dr. Stemmler and his wife Joan loved nature, dancing, music, good food and wine. They consistently completed the New York Times crossword puzzle and enjoyed retirement in the woods of Virginia, where Mr. Stemmler cooked and enjoyed fly fishing. "An important aspect of Ed's personality was his ability to make others feel valued, regardless of status," wrote his family in an online tribute. "Ed's hellos, chats, and connections with store clerks to colleagues characterized his kind and welcoming approach to life. He was always willing to advise and support individuals in need who were directed his way by the family who could call upon him when a friend's mother's hairdresser's boyfriend's granny had questions about her surgery, and he would get in touch to listen and lend a hand."

A private memorial gathering was held at the Kendal at Longwood. He is survived by his wife of 64 years, Dr. Joan K. Stemmler; their five children, Beth (Clark Porter), Peggy (Patrick Liu, deceased), Ed, Cathy, and Joan; and their five grandsons, Jasper Liu, Daniel Porter, Benjamin Liu, Matthew Porter and Joshua Taibbi.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Residents or Staff Assistance Funds at Kendal or to the Joan K. Stemmler and Edward J. Stemmler Endowed Scholarship at the University of Pennsylvania Stemmler Scholarship Fund. For the latter, checks may be made out to the Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania; include "in memory of Edward J. Stemmler" on the memo line. Please send attn: Laura Weber, Penn Arts and Sciences Advancement, 3600 Market Street, Suite 300, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19104.