

Martin G. St. John Sutton, PSOM

JULY 14, 2020 | VOL 67 ISSUE 1 ([HTTPS://ALMANAC.UPENN.EDU/VOLUME-67-NUMBER-1](https://almanac.upenn.edu/volume-67-number-1)) | DEATHS | PRINT



Martin G. St. John Sutton

Martin G. St. John Sutton, emeritus professor of medicine and former John W. Bryfogle Professor of Medicine in Penn's Perelman School of Medicine, passed away peacefully at his home on June 8. He was 74.

Dr. St. John Sutton completed his BSc and MBBS at Guy's Hospital Medical School in London. He originally planned to study neurology but due to a position allotment error, he trained in cardiology instead. Following registrar positions at the Addenbrooke's (Cambridge University) and the Royal Brompton Hospitals, he spent two years as a research fellow at the Biodynamics Research Unit at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, studying the use of ultrasound in fetal physiology, which, in concert with performing surgeries in London with Russell Claude Brock, one of the pioneers of open heart surgery, stimulated a lifelong interest in congenital heart diseases.

In 1979, he was recruited to the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine as an instructor in the HUP cardiovascular division, where he worked with Nathaniel Reichek and Pamela Douglas on a wide variety of clinical applications of echocardiography, many related to left ventricular (LV) function assessment. He became an assistant professor of medicine and co-director of the HUP Non-Invasive Cardiac Laboratory before being recruited to the Brigham and Women's Hospital of the Harvard Medical School as an associate professor of medicine and the director of the Non-invasive Cardiology Laboratories in 1984.

At the Brigham, some of his most impactful work was on the use of angiotensin converting enzyme inhibitors to prevent post-infarction LV remodeling. His seminal pre-clinical work with Ted Plappert, his long-time research technologist and collaborator, provided the scientific support for the SAVE trial, which changed practice and began a new era of post-infarction therapy, according to a tribute by PSOM cardiovascular division chief Thomas P. Cappola and department of medicine chair Michael S. Parmacek. This work codified the tools now used to quantify cardiac function, and provided the foundation for all subsequent studies of ventricular remodeling.

Dr. St. John Sutton returned to the Royal Brompton National Heart and Lung Hospital from 1990 to 1993, where he was a pioneer in transesophageal echocardiography, frequently undergoing the procedure himself (without anesthesia) to demonstrate the technique for teaching purposes. In 1993, he was recruited back to Penn as the John W. Bryfogle Professor of Medicine. He also became the director of the Cardiovascular Imaging Program and director of the Cardiology Fellowship Program. With colleagues from HUP and CHOP, he organized the first joint Adult Congenital Heart Disease program at the medical complex. He established the Center for Quantitative Echocardiography at HUP, which oversaw imaging for a series of landmark clinical trials, including MIRACLE, BEST and BLOCK-HF. Drs. Cappola and Parmacek noted that his work on cardiac resynchronization therapy was groundbreaking and steered the field in an entirely new direction: device therapy for heart failure. He also developed novel echocardiographic techniques for many landmark large animal studies of infarction and valvular disease in the L. Henry Edmunds and Gorman cardiac surgical research laboratories. He retired in 2014 and earned emeritus status at that time.

Drs. Cappola and Parmacek wrote, "His clinical acumen was extraordinary, and his skill in managing complex cases, especially challenging congenital heart disease patients, cardiovascular diseases in pregnancy, and rare diseases, made him a sought-after consultant and a champion for his devoted patients throughout the entirety of his career.... [His] greatest legacy will be the generations of cardiology leaders he trained around the world, and his commitment to advancing women and underrepresented minorities in academic and clinical cardiovascular medicine."

Dr. St. John Sutton published over 500 peer-reviewed manuscripts, reviews, chapters and editorials and contributed to numerous guidelines and society statements. He was the primary or senior author of nearly 20 books and served on numerous editorial boards. Among his many honors were the Physician Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Society of Echocardiography in 2016 and the HUP Cardiac Imaging Teaching Award. He was a fellow of the Royal College of Physicians, the European Society of Cardiology, the American Heart Association, the American College of Cardiology, and the American Society of Echocardiography. Penn's annual Outstanding Fellow Research Award was renamed in his honor in 2010.

Memorial service arrangements will be announced in the future. In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made in Dr. St. John Sutton's name to: The Penn Cardiovascular Fellowship Teaching Fund, 11-113 South Pavilion, 3400 Civic Center Blvd., Philadelphia, PA 19104 or <https://www.pennmedicine.org/cardiofellowship> (<https://www.pennmedicine.org/cardiofellowship>); or The Penn Parkinson's Disease and Movement Disorder's Center Fund, 330 S. 9th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19107 or <https://www.med.upenn.edu/pdmdc/> (<https://www.med.upenn.edu/pdmdc/>)