

Ralph Wetmore, CHOP

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DEATHS

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Ralph Wetmore

Ralph Frederick Wetmore Jr., M’76, the former chief of the division of otolaryngology at the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) and a professor emeritus of otorhinolaryngology in the Perelman School of Medicine, died on September 3 from complications of Lewy body dementia. He was 71.

Dr. Wetmore was born in Allentown, Pennsylvania, and graduated from Franklin and Marshall College in 1972 with a bachelor’s degree in geology. Four years later, he graduated from Penn’s School of Medicine, and in 1978, after doing a postgrad surgical fellowship and training at Penn, he joined the school’s faculty in the department of otorhinolaryngology. In 1990, he became an associate professor in that department, and ten years later, he was promoted to a full professor. Meanwhile, at CHOP, he treated ear, nose, and throat ailments

in thousands of children; taught pediatric otolaryngology to hundreds of medical students, residents, and fellows; and eventually rose to president of the medical staff. He is fondly remembered for his “no-nonsense teaching style and patience” and “charismatic smile with a matching wit.” He held CHOP’s E. Mortimer Newlin endowed chair in pediatric otolaryngology and human communication from 2008 until his retirement in 2020 (upon which he assumed emeritus status).

Outside of Penn, Dr. Wetmore was active in his field. He wrote over 100 scholarly articles about his research in voice disorders, respiratory abnormalities, and other ailments in children, and served as president of the American Society of Pediatric Otolaryngology (ASPO) and the Society for Ear Nose and Throat Advancement in Children (SENTAC). In 1993, the Triological Society, the most prominent international honor society of otolaryngologists, awarded Dr. Wetmore the Edmund Prince Fowler Award for his research on sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). He served on the editorial board of the *World Journal of Otorhinolaryngology—Head & Neck Surgery*.

Dr. Wetmore found time for a variety of personal interests, adopting dogs from animal shelters, playing golf, and writing a movie review column in CHOP’s operating room newsletter. His kindness was well-known—he once rescued a choking diner in a restaurant and attended to victims of a car crash he came upon.

Dr. Wetmore is survived by his wife, Melinda DeMoss; his son, Rick, and his daughter, Alicia; two grandsons; a sister; and other relatives. A memorial service was held on September 13. Donations in his name may be made to Penn’s Digital Neuropathology Lab (<https://www.med.upenn.edu/digitalneuropathologylab/>). Checks should be made out to the Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania. Write “In memory of Dr. Ralph Wetmore” on the comment line and mail to Paige O’Malley, 3535 Market St., Suite 750, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 19104.