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# Nancy O'Neal Tatum Dedication

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## Nancy O'Neal Tatum

I knew Nancy Tatum while we were both medical students; I graduated in 1979 and she in 1980. After residency at the University of Mississippi Medical Center, we took different career paths. I completed a fellowship in infectious diseases and then joined the faculty in the Department of Medicine in 1984. She entered the private practice of family medicine in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, with her father, Dr. A. T. "Deet" Tatum in 1983 and together they were the only father-daughter medical partners in the state. After the death of her father in 1983, she followed a long-held interest in medical ethics by becoming a visiting scholar at the Center for Clinical and Research Ethics at Vanderbilt University in Nashville. In 1993, she returned to UMC as a faculty member in the Department of Family Medicine. As a faculty member, residents and students quickly recognized her as an excellent teacher and mentor. In 1994, she received the departments

Golden Stethoscope Award, recognizing her as their best teacher.



Soon after returning to the Medical Center faculty, Nancy set about her goal of establishing a program of medical ethics for UMC. She worked to establish and chaired the first Medical Ethics Advisory Committee for the University Hospital with its three subcommittees, ethics education, consultation and policy. She also worked with the School of Medicine Curriculum Committee to include medical ethics as an integral part of the curriculum. In 1996, she participated in the Harvard Macy Program for Physician Educators, developing a curriculum for a required course in medical ethics for senior medical students. She was instrumental in securing funding for ethics education through the Vicksburg Medical Foundation and she dreamed of establishing a

center of excellence in medical ethics at the Medical Center.

As great as her contribution to ethics education was at the Medical Center, she had an equally great impact across the state, speaking on medical ethics topics to physician groups, students and the public. She was elected to the Mississippi State Medical Association Board of Trustees and

to the Mississippi delegation to the AMA. She also served on the board of directors of the University of Southern Mississippi Foundation and Whispering Pines Hospice. She was an excellent physician with a busy practice and patients who loved her, not only for her excellent medical care, but also because she genuinely cared for them.

She was an avid sports fan, attending as many of the University of Southern Mississippi football games as she could. She also loved the Green Bay Packers and, in fact, she watched a game with her "cheese head" on just days before she died of lymphoma.

To describe Dr. Tatum as an excellent, caring physician, teacher and mentor does not do her justice. She was much more than that. To me she was a friend and colleague who exemplified the best that a physician can be. The work she began in medical ethics and her impact on residents, students, physicians and all that knew her will continue for many years to come.

After her death at the age of 48 in 1998, the Ethics Advisory Committee established the Nancy O'Neal Tatum Series in Medical Ethics as a quarterly lecture series which has been attended by hundreds of health care professionals from multiple disciplines from the Medical Center and state-wide. We are continuing to build on the foundation in medical ethics that Nancy laid. By telling her story to young students and those who did not have the pleasure of knowing her, we will keep her memory alive and continue her work as she would have wanted us to do.

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