

In Memoriam: UCSD Neuroscientist, Renowned Parkinson's Disease Researcher Clifford W. Shults

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Clifford W. Shults, M.D, professor of neurosciences at the UCSD School of Medicine and neurologist at the Veterans Affairs San Diego Healthcare System died of complications of cancer on February 7. Shults, 56, was a resident of La Jolla, California.

A memorial service will be held at 10 a.m., Saturday, February 17, at La Jolla Presbyterian Church, 7715 Draper Avenue.

A physician, teacher and researcher, Shults was widely recognized for his studies of movement disorders and especially for his contributions to understanding the causes of Parkinson's disease (PD). In a study published in 2002, he was the first to show a successful method to slow progressive impairment in patients with early-stage Parkinson's disease using the antioxidant Q-10, an over-the-counter supplement.

"Dr. Shults always conducted his research with the utmost scientific integrity," said David D. Song, M.D., Ph.D., co-director of UCSD's Parkinson's Disease Research Center. "His groundbreaking approaches to the study of Parkinson's disease gave thousands of patients hope. He was extremely hardworking, but always generous with his time to me and other colleagues in the department, and we will miss his leadership."

"He was truly a bench-to-bedside researcher," said Evelyn Tecoma, M.D., Ph.D., UCSD professor of neurosciences and neurologist at the VA San Diego Medical Center. "He studied what goes wrong at the cellular level in Parkinson's, and then used those findings to design clinical trials aimed at finding ways to protect the patients' nervous system from the disease." Tecoma added, "He really loved seeing patients in the clinic and teaching residents."

Shults was instrumental in establishing the Veterans Affairs San Diego Medical Center as part of the national network of Parkinson's Disease Research, Education and Clinical Centers (PADRECC), dedicated to caring for veterans with the disease.

He also coordinated a study by researchers at 12 sites around the country as part of a five-year, \$7 million grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to study Multiple Systems Atrophy, a progressive, fatal neurological disorder.

Shults was born in Newport, Tennessee, a small town in the Smoky Mountains. He received his A.B. degree from Brown University, and M.D. degree from the University of Tennessee. He trained in Internal Medicine at the University of California, San Francisco, and in Neurology at Albert Einstein College of Medicine, followed by a fellowship at the NIH. It was there that he began his research in movement disorders and the roles of neuropeptides in the brain. He came to UCSD and the VA San Diego Medical Center in 1985. At the VA Medical Center he served as chief of the neurology service for nine years.

Among his professional appointments, Shults was a member of the Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson Research. He was awarded the Junior Faculty Award by the Parkinson Disease Foundation and the Victory Award at the Unity Walk in New York City in 2003. He has been listed in *America's Top Doctors*, a listing of top medical specialists in the nation.

Shults was dedicated to his family. He enjoyed kayaking, hiking and digging for clams with his family at their cabin on Whidbey Island in Washington's Puget Sound. He is survived by his wife, Ellen Koutsky Shults, and daughter, Sarah, of La Jolla, and son Andrew who attends the University of Pennsylvania. He is survived by his mother Love and brother Bill Shults of Newport, Tennessee; brother Glen of Ashville, North Carolina, and their families.

In lieu of flowers, the family suggests contributions to Habitat for Humanity as a remembrance.

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