

## UC San Diego Physician Receives Ellis Island Medal of Honor

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When a young Stuart Jamieson first began to study medicine, he waited tables to put himself through medical school. Now, more than four decades later, this world-renowned cardiothoracic surgeon is being honored with an Ellis Island Medal of Honor for his early sacrifices and groundbreaking successes.

Jamieson and his fellow honorees will be recognized at a black tie gala in the Great Hall on Ellis Island, with fireworks, on Saturday, May 10, 2008. The list of past recipients includes Presidents Reagan and Ford, General Norman Schwarzkopf, Muhammad Ali, Barbara Walters, Donald Trump and Lee Iacocca.

Because of a civil war in his homeland of Zimbabwe, Jamieson left Africa for London, England, in the mid 1960s. He attended the University of London while waiting tables and "went to bed hungry every night for five years" in order to put his earnings toward medical education. Jamieson says he was always fascinated by heart transplantation and, in 1978, secured a rare fellowship position with preeminent heart surgeon Norman Shumway, M.D. of Stanford University, who performed the nation's first heart transplant. Today, Jamieson is himself an internationally acclaimed surgeon who has advanced the field of heart and lung transplantation. Jamieson's success rate is among the highest in the world.

"I am honored to be added to this distinguished list of names. Previous honorees have brought their expertise and influenced others in so many diverse areas of life, it's really outstanding," said Stuart Jamieson, M.B., F.R.C.S., Distinguished Professor of Surgery; Chief, Division of Cardiothoracic Surgery; Director of the Lung Transplant Program at UC San Diego Medical Center.

The Ellis Island Medal of Honor was established in 1986 by the National Coalition of Organizations (NECO) "to pay tribute to the ancestry groups that make up America's unique cultural mosaic. Each year the ceremony celebrates the immigrant experience on Ellis Island, through which millions of immigrants passed on their way to a new life in America."

"Dr. Jamieson represents the best America has to offer in medicine and in academia. At heart, he is a pioneer, with an entrepreneurial spirit. People like him are what make this country great," said David Brenner, M.D., Vice Chancellor for Health Sciences and Dean of the School of Medicine, UC San Diego.

"Dr. Jamieson's surgical prowess is second to none. We are fortunate to have him living, working, teaching and researching in our UC San Diego community, but his work, as we proudly note, benefits medical professionals and patients around the world," added Mark Talamini, Chairman of the Department of Surgery.

Jamieson's groundbreaking research and innovative therapies are known world-wide, such as his leadership of the UCSD Pulmonary Thromboendarterectomy (PTE) Program. This program is foremost in the world in the successful treatment of chronic thromboembolic pulmonary hypertension. In fact, every other program in the world currently performing PTE, a complex and delicate surgery involving the removal of clots from the lungs, was trained by the UC San Diego team.

## **Background**

Jamieson is a respected pioneer in the field of heart and lung surgery. In the laboratory, the clinic and the operating room, through his own practice and through his widespread professional influence, he has improved the health and saved the lives of countless patients.

Remembering his early days as a struggling student, Jamieson said, "For many people in our current society, things come pretty easily. Hardship is not something people are accustomed to. Having to work very hard for something I wanted, made the lesson and the eventual success more valuable."

That ability to persevere has served Jamieson well in his surgical career. "There's no such thing as 'lack of adversity' in academic cardiac surgery. Anyone who's been successful in a pioneering field, such as transplantation, must have had failures along the way. There's no such thing as a successful person who hasn't faced adversity head on," said Jamieson.

After training and working with Norman Shumway, M.D., who established the nation's first successful heart and lung transplant programs at Stanford University, Jamieson went on to become the director of heart and lung transplant at Stanford in 1982. In 1986, he became director of the Minnesota Heart and Lung Institute at the University of Minnesota.

UC San Diego Medical Center brought Jamieson and his entire team to San Diego in 1988 to head up its new Heart and Lung Transplant Center. That very same team is still together, having performed approximately 40,000 cardiothoracic surgeries during the last two decades. To this day, Jamieson's patients are the longest surviving lung and heart transplant patients in the world. While his work is monumentally complex, Jamieson's approach is quite simple, "We never say something can't be done; we just say it hasn't been done yet."

Jamieson has co-authored two books, written more than 450 articles and given nearly 400 presentations and lectures. Early in his career, in 1976, Jamieson received the "Young Investigator Award" from the European Congress of Cardiology, and the honors have continued throughout, including President, International Society of Cardio-Thoracic Surgeons, 2003; President, World Congress of World Society of Cardio-Thoracic Surgeons, 2004; and current Chancellor, World Society of Cardiothoracic Surgery. Jamieson is also noted in: Who's Who Among American Teachers, "Who's Who in Science and Engineering," "Who's Who in American Education," "Who's Who in Medicine," "Who's Who in America," "Who's Who in the World," "Best Doctors in the West," and "Best Doctors in America."

## **About NECO**

NECO (National Ethnic Coalition of Organizations) was created in 1984 on the conviction of its founder, William Denis Fugazy, that the diversity of the American people is what makes this nation great.

NECO's mission is simple-to honor our diverse Past, to advocate for positive change in the Present, and to build strong leaders for the Future.

Each year since 1986, NECO has sponsored the Ellis Island Medals of Honor. The Medals are presented on Ellis Island, in a dramatic ceremony, to American citizens of diverse origins for their outstanding contributions to their communities, their nation and the world. Past recipients include six Presidents of the United States, Nobel Prize winners, athletes, industry leaders, artists, and others, whose work has made a lasting impact on humanity.

Both the United States Senate and House of Representatives have officially passed resolutions recognizing the Ellis Island Medals of Honor, which ranks among this country's most prestigious awards. Each year, Ellis Island Medal of Honor recipients are listed in the Congressional Record, honoring those who have made enduring contributions to our nation and to the world.

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