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Robert A. Zimmerman, MD

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Robert A. Zimmerman, MD

On February 23, 2021, the pediatric neuroradiology community lost our beloved colleague, master clinician, and mentor, Dr Robert “Bob” A. Zimmerman. He died peacefully at home, amid family.

Bob was born June 20, 1938, in Philadelphia, and he received his bachelor of arts degree in biology at Temple University in 1960. He graduated from Georgetown University Medical School *summa cum laude* in 1964.

He interned in internal medicine at Georgetown University Hospital and completed his radiology residency at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania (HUP). He then served in the military from 1969 to 1972, mostly in Europe. Bob returned to HUP, where he swiftly rose through the ranks to become full Professor of Radiology with a secondary appointment in neurosurgery. Dr. Zimmerman served as Chief of Neuroradiology at HUP from 1979 to 1985. He transitioned to the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) and served as Chief of Pediatric Neuroradiology at CHOP until his retirement in 2018.

Dr. Zimmerman was a champion of interdisciplinary cooperation in aid of a child. With his colleagues in neurosurgery, neuropathology, and radiology, he helped to create and maintain the world-renowned Section of Pediatric Neuroradiology at CHOP. In honor of his extraordinary excellence and his years of dedication, CHOP created the Robert A. Zimmerman Endowed Chair in Pediatric Neuroradiology in 2018, presently held by Dr Larissa T. Bilaniuk.

Dr. Zimmerman’s research was recognized nationally and internationally. For decades, he was the featured speaker at national and international scientific meetings. For his work, Dr. Zimmerman received countless awards and honors, including the honorary membership of the Belgian Radiological Society in 2000 and the European Society of Neuroradiology in 2001, the American Society of Neuroradiology Special Achievement Award (later designated the Gold Medal) in 2002, the Award for Special Contributions in Research from the American Society of Neuroradiology in 2012, and the honorary membership of the Italian Neuroradiological Society in 2016.

Dr. Zimmerman authored more than 350 publications, edited 2 textbooks, reviewed for the major scientific journals in radiology, neuroradiology, neurosurgery, and neurology, and was a perennial member of the National Institutes of Health panel on sickle cell disease. From 1989 to 2005, he served as the United States Editor-in-Chief of *Neuroradiology*, the official journal of the European Society of Neuroradiology, the Japanese Society of Neuroradiology, and more than 20 national European neuroradiological societies.

Dr. Zimmerman was a founding member of the American Society of Pediatric Neuroradiology (ASPNR) and President of the ASPNR from 1995 to 1996.

Beyond his academic work, Bob was a loving husband, father, and grandfather. He met his future wife, Dianne, when they were both camp counselors, and they married in 1960, sixty-one years ago. He loved to read to his kids, and he became an avid gardener.



Because of his time in Europe, Bob became a connoisseur of fine food and wine. No matter which city hosted a scientific meeting, domestic or international, Bob had already scouted out where to dine and which vineyard to visit when the meeting ended.

Medicine is a tradition, perpetuated by mentoring across the generations. Beyond “academics,” your legacy is what you have passed on to those who follow. Dr. Zimmerman trained numerous residents and fellows in pediatric neuroradiology. His legacy may be summarized by the spontaneous outpouring of memories and love:

“He was such a giant in our field, and a kind and generous man.”

“He is so very present to us on a regular basis through his work; I can’t tell you how many times I refer to his many publications.”

“I was so privileged that he accepted me as a friend and that he has always been extremely supportive of me.”

“Many teach what you have to know. Bob taught us the joy of neuroradiology and the special honor it was to help to heal children.”

“I remember Bob as a gentle giant, a renaissance man who was always looking after you as a human, a colleague, a friend, a mentor, somebody who enjoyed shaping and supporting your career and who would always be there for advice. Because of him I will enjoy pediatric neuroradiology for the rest of my career.”

Dr. Zimmerman is survived by his loving wife Dianne, their beloved daughters Rachel and Sara, and their precious grandchildren, Ivan and Sasha Boyko. He will be remembered fondly by the many friends, colleagues, and trainees who loved him, respected him, and miss him sorely.

On behalf of all pediatric neuroradiologists around the globe.

T.P. Naidich
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