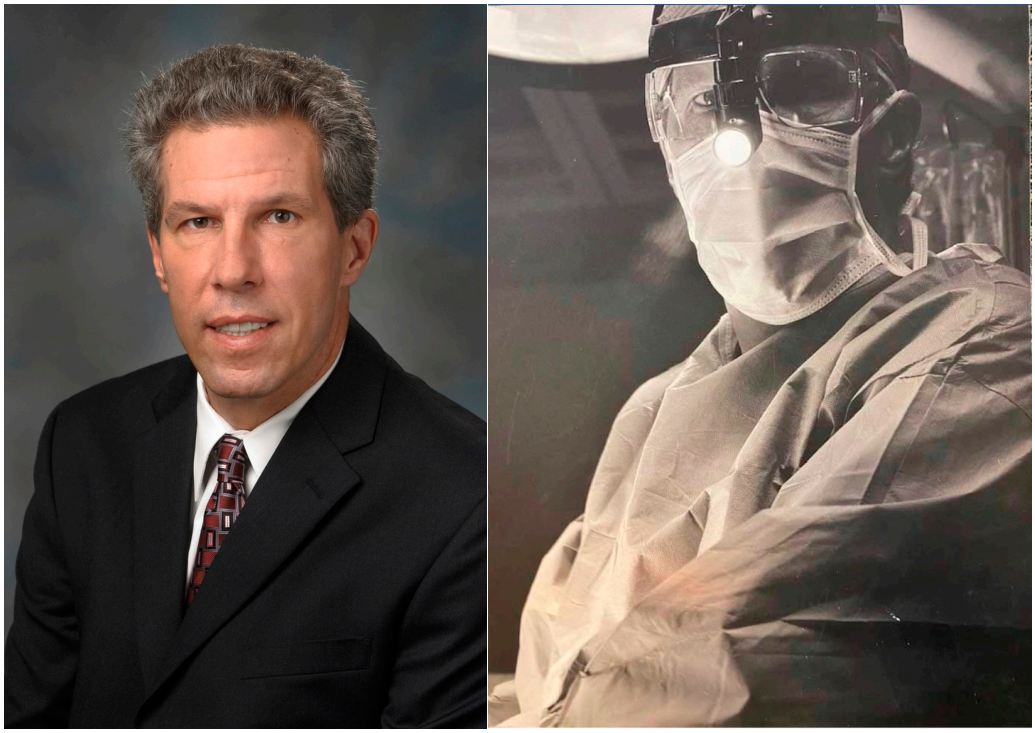
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Giants in Urology

Dr. Christopher G. Wood (22 November 1963 to 3 November 2021)

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Dr. Christopher Wood was not just a highly skilled retroperitoneal and renal surgeon; he was a legend in the field of urologic oncology, an accomplished clinical and basic science researcher, a friend, and a mentor to a generation of urologic oncologists fortunate enough to train under his guidance.

Born on 22 November 1963, Dr. Wood embarked on his medical journey at Northwestern University in Chicago, earning his medical degree in 1989. His relentless pursuit of knowledge led him back to Northwestern for a six-year urology residency. This was followed by a three-year urologic oncology fellowship at MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston from 1995 to 1998. It was at MD Anderson that Dr. Wood's career truly took flight.

Starting with a dual appointment as an assistant professor in urology and cancer biology, he rapidly ascended the ranks, achieving full professorship with tenure by 2010. He was subsequently awarded the prestigious Douglas E. Johnson, M.D., Endowed Professorship in Urology in 2012. From 2008 until his untimely death in 2021, Dr. Wood served as

the Deputy Chair of Urology, inspiring students and colleagues alike with his unyielding dedication to the field.

Dr. Wood's skill as a surgeon was world-renowned. His ability to complete highly complex surgical cases in a fraction of the time typically taken by others, often managing five to six such cases effortlessly in a single day, was nothing short of awe-inspiring. However, what set Dr. Wood apart was not just his surgical expertise, but also his empathy. Despite having completed over 5000 nephrectomies for kidney cancer throughout his career, Dr. Wood always maintained a personal connection with his patients. Patients from across the globe sought his care, and he frequently established lifelong bonds and friendships with them.

His influence extended to the more than 75 urologic oncology fellows privileged to train under him. Being considered a "Wood fellow" became a mark of distinction, a testament to being trained by the best in the field. His expectations were high: he demanded hard work and a commitment to excellence both inside and outside the surgical theater. Yet, his intimidating demeanor in the operating room was balanced by his commitment to personally developing each fellow, setting them up for success in their careers and life.

In addition to his surgical accomplishments, Dr. Wood made significant contributions to kidney cancer research, with over 400 peer-reviewed publications. His scientific presentations at international venues were often highlights, showcasing his clear thinking and his comprehensive understanding of the scientific literature and ability to present complex ideas in a practical and accessible manner.

Dr. Wood was known not only for his academic and surgical prowess but also for his personable, down-to-earth approach that he maintained throughout his career. He had a blue-collar mentality—rooted in humility, hard work, and a steadfast dedication to his craft. Unlike some in the lofty towers of the academic world, Dr. Wood did not let his numerous accolades define him. Instead, he focused on the success of those he mentored commonly saying "Your success is my success". He was a tireless advocate for his fellows and his team, often shifting the spotlight onto their achievements. Whether it was over an intimate dinner or speaking before thousands at a scientific conference, he always took the opportunity to highlight the accomplishments of his team and MD Anderson. He was more than just their mentor; he was their champion, continuously working to create an environment where they could excel. His selfless, inclusive leadership style fostered a sense of unity and mutual respect among his team members, creating an environment where everyone felt valued and motivated to achieve their best.

This generosity extended beyond his professional life. It was part of his essence, a testament to his belief in collective success and the impact of mentorship. He championed the idea that the success of one was the success of all, and he carried this belief into every aspect of his life. His priority was always lifting others, ensuring that their hard work was recognized and celebrated. In this way, Dr. Wood left a lasting legacy of teamwork and shared achievement that continues to inspire those who had the privilege to work with him.

While Dr. Christopher Wood's professional life was nothing short of extraordinary, he was also a man of diverse interests and hobbies beyond the worlds of academia and medicine. He was an avid sports fan, with a special love for football. His dual loyalty to the Texans and the New England Patriots was a source of much friendly debate, especially during the football season. His ability to balance a highly demanding career with a rich, fulfilling personal life served as a testament to his philosophy of living fully. In doing so, he set a shining example for his fellows and colleagues showing them that it was possible to strive for excellence in their work while also embracing a well-rounded, fulfilling life beyond their professional commitments.

Dr. Wood's sudden passing just before his 58th birthday has been a devastating blow to the global urologic and medical oncology community. He left behind his wife, Colleen, and their two children, Chris Jr. and Sarah. His loss was met with an outpouring of love and sadness expressed by scientific organizations, colleagues, and former patients. Dr.

Wood was more than a mentor and role model; he was a friend who made it a point to promote his trainees at every opportunity. In all that he did, he set a benchmark for surgical skill, academic achievement, and mentorship that we all strive to emulate.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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