



IN MEMORIAM

Felix D. Battistella
Professor of Surgery and Chief of Trauma and Emergency Surgery
UC Davis
1959 - 2008

Dr. Felix D. Battistella, professor of surgery and chief of trauma and emergency surgery in the University of California, Davis, Health System, died at home on January 22, 2008 after a protracted battle with cancer. He was 48. Dr. Battistella was born in 1959, the son of Italian immigrants who had settled in Monterey. During his early childhood, Dr. Battistella's family lived both in Monterey, California and in Italy as they cared for one of Felix's siblings, who was ill and ultimately died. The family spoke Italian in the home and Felix's father was a baker.

Dr. Battistella was an accomplished student and after graduating magna cum laude with a bachelor's degree in chemistry from the University of Santa Clara in 1981, he matriculated at the University of California, Davis Medical School. He had a distinguished medical school career and as a senior was named the outstanding medical student in surgery in his class. Dr. Battistella followed medical school with a residency in surgery at the University of California, Davis and his residency career was similarly distinguished; he was voted the outstanding resident teacher by medical school seniors and in his final year of residency in 1991 was selected by his fellow residents as the outstanding chief resident. Dr. Battistella's talents as a clinician and operating surgeon were also clearly apparent during his residency and he was actively recruited to join the surgical faculty at UC Davis, something he chose to do at the completion of his residency.

As a faculty member, Felix quickly established himself as a superb clinician and surgeon. He rose quickly to the rank of Professor of Surgery and was one of the busiest and most accomplished surgeons in the Department of Surgery, and was sought after by other members of the department for his clinical acumen and technical expertise. He served admirably for a time as the University of California, Davis Surgical Residency Director, an enormous job requiring administrative and interpersonal skills, as well as, the respect of the rest of the Department. Felix also spent considerable time helping with vertebral column surgeries at the Shriner's Hospital in Sacramento.

As a faculty member in the Department of Surgery, Dr. Battistella was named a Friend of Nursing in 1997, and was twice voted the outstanding teacher of the year by the surgical house staff. He served as chief of staff of the UC Davis Medical Center from 2004 to 2006, another sign of the high esteem in which he was held by his colleagues. Within the Department of Surgery, Felix became the chief of trauma and emergency surgery and was one of the nation's primary architects of a new and evolving discipline that combined the management of traditional trauma and critical care surgery with the management of a wide array of non-trauma surgical emergencies. Because of his broad and extraordinary clinical skills, Dr. Battistella was uniquely suited to aid the evolution of this new specialty.

It is an old axiom that great physicians embody the "Three A's" of "Ability, Affability, and Availability." Dr. Battistella embodied all of these attributes. There is no question that he was able; the best clinician and

technical surgeon many of us had the privilege of knowing. He was also able in so many other ways, from a way with all things mechanical, to an ability to turn himself into a terrific bike rider, to someone with impressive intuition about people.

Affability also fit. He could relate to many different personalities and not only relate to them, but also get them to love him. He was also incredibly affable in his private and family life; his wife Christine and daughters Claire and Mary survive him. There was never a more devoted husband and father, a particularly noteworthy quality in a busy trauma and emergency surgeon, in that time management and attention to family can be particularly challenging for a surgeon engaged in that discipline.

Availability; those of us who worked with Felix know of his willingness to cover for others and shoulder a disproportionate share of the load. He once said that what he had chosen to do for a living was an inherently selfish pursuit - but while that might have been true, Felix did not really live his life that way. He had a remarkable way of being there for everybody, patients, residents, those of us who were his colleagues and most importantly his family. He had a way of making us all feel as though we were a priority.

Felix was also a dedicated bicyclist and participated as a member and Board of Directors of Team Donate Life. This is a group of medical professionals, transplant donors, and recipients, who in 2005, 2006, and 2007 rode their bicycles in the Race Across America (RAAM) to promote organ donation. During the 2005 race, completed in six days, Felix crashed at one point and broke his nose; he set it himself and kept riding. In the 2007 RAAM, Felix had continued to support the cycling teams with his famous strategic riding- resting schedule flow sheets and with words of wisdom on problem solving.

Felix Battistella will be sorely missed. He leaves enduring legacies from both his professional and personal life

David Wisner
James Goodnight
Lorenzo Rossaro
Lynette Scherer