



February 19, 2013

Dear Members of the Senate Health Care & Human Services Committee,

On behalf of Oregon Health & Science University, we are writing to express our strong support of SCR 6, which would honor William E. Connor, M.D.

Dr. William E. "Bill" Connor was a clinician and scientist whose pioneering research helped Americans grasp the powerful links between diet and disease. He was known as an endlessly curious, energetic and gentle-mannered researcher at Oregon Health & Science University, where he had practiced since 1975 when first appointed Professor in the Department of Medicine (Divisions of Cardiology and Metabolism), also serving as Associate Director and then Director of the Clinical Research Center. He became Professor in the Division of Endocrinology, Diabetes and Clinical Nutrition in 1992.

Dr. Connor's research focused on how omega-3 fatty acids, such as fish oil, may prevent death from heart attacks. The research led directly to recommendations that people with heart disease eat fish twice a week. In collaboration with a variety of colleagues, Dr. Connor made a number of links between nutrition and disease that were at the time controversial but which have since become accepted as fact. He demonstrated that diabetics could eat a low-fat, high fiber diet and still control their blood sugar levels.

In 1974 he discovered a new genetic disease (sistosterolemia) that can clog arteries. The long term "Family Heart Study" – conducted between 1978 and 1984 and involving 233 Portland families – showed that a typical family eating 40 percent fat could gradually drop fat consumption to 30 percent. A recipe book titled "The Best from the Family Heart Kitchens" was one of the results of this study. He also demonstrated that omega-3 fatty acids are important nutrients for infants – research that impacted the composition of infant formulas.

He last turned his attention to studying the relationship between lutein, an antioxidant, and macular degeneration, showing that eating five to nine servings of vegetables and fruits daily would increase the amount of lutein in the blood and in breast milk.

Dr. Connor was a dedicated faculty member who exemplified the spirit of scientific inquiry and collaboration so valued at OHSU. His contributions to health and research, not to mention his passionate work on humanitarian issues, were enormous and beneficial to Oregonians. He was a mentor, an educator and a good friend who is greatly missed.

OHSU is grateful for this opportunity to honor William E. Connor, M.D., for his many achievements and contributions.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Mark A. Richardson in black ink.

Mark A. Richardson, MD  
Dean  
School of Medicine

Handwritten signature of Kent L. Thornburg in black ink.

Kent L. Thornburg, PhD  
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