



Vincent A. Memoli, M.D.  
1950–2020

# Vincent A. Memoli, M.D. 1950–2020: An Appreciation

By Edward Gutmann, MD

Vincent (“Vince”) A. Memoli, M.D., long-time surgical pathologist at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center and Professor of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine at Dartmouth’s Geisel School of Medicine, passed away on July 12, 2020, aged 69.

The Facts: Raised in the Bronx; educated at Fordham Prep and Fordham University; medical school and residency at Tufts and Rush, respectively; practiced 34 years at Dartmouth, retiring in 2017; continued teaching pathology residents through May 2020.

An Appreciation: Dr. Memoli was among the last of a diminishing breed, the expert general surgical pathologist, comfortable at assessing, and capable of accurately diagnosing, tumors and other lesions from the full range of body organs, e.g., breast, skin, lung, bone, thyroid, kidney, brain. In contrast, most recent pathology trainees now practicing at academic medical centers have done fellowships focused on one or two organ systems and restrict their daily patient care work to the comfort zone of those systems. While at Rush, Vincent did seminal research in the then nascent field of immunohistochemistry and ultimately established at Dartmouth an ongoing, first-class laboratory in that discipline. Drawing on the 1984 Nobel Prize-winning work of Köhler and Milstein, immunohistochemical studies help a pathologist determine, for example, from which organ a metastatic cancer in the lung might have arisen and in many instances can predict a patient’s prognosis and guide treatment.

With a broad fund of knowledge across the range of body sites, innate talent, a strong work ethic, expertise in the critical adjunct technology of immunohistochemistry, an open door policy, and an outgoing, voluble

Members’ Corner, cont. on page 18



personality, Dr. Memoli became the “go to” consultant for many pathologists and surgeons working at Dartmouth or at regional hospitals, when they faced a challenging pathology case. Appropriately, for several decades he was generally considered to be one of the handful of finest anatomic pathologists in the tristate northern New England region.

Over many years, Dr. Memoli was also a popular teacher at Dartmouth’s medical school and won several teaching awards. Given the breadth of his knowledge, he could teach the pathology of any organ system, but primarily focused on the skeletal system and the endocrine system. He was the pathologist to a distinguished group of Dartmouth clinical professors, including John (“Jack”) Turco and Richard Comi, who for many years together taught the endocrine system to second year medical students. In 2018, in recognition of his teaching efforts, Vincent was honored with the Geisel (School of Medicine) Academy of Master Educators’ Lifetime Achievement Award.

Testimonies to Dr. Memoli’s contributions to immunohistochemistry, diagnostic acumen, and teaching prowess incompletely capture his essence. He was a raconteur and at his core a “people person,” who needed and enjoyed the attention of others and who simultaneously was attentive to their needs. He was comfortable speaking one-on-one with the occasional patient who had a question about a life-altering pathology diagnosis; he counseled scores of technicians, administrative assistants, and physicians when they came to him in a time of personal crisis, health-related or otherwise; and, uniquely, he mentored dozens of pathology trainees and junior pathologists, who, drawing on his teachings and advice, now practice in academic or community settings throughout the country. His mentees include current chiefs of Pathology departments.

Despite his stature in New England, Vince remained true to his Bronx roots. No visitor to his office could fail to see the framed picture of Mickey Mantle, reflecting his life-long devotion to the New York Yankees. He was loyal as well to his family, to the educational institutions that helped him achieve success, and to the civic institutions that gave him and others pleasure.

While many of us will retain an image of Dr. Memoli in his office, door open, holding court behind his microscope (with Mantle behind him), we also will remember - and miss - the annual summer picnic he hosted at a lake house in New Hampshire. Vince, cooking at the grill, was pleased to be host to all comers, including any member of his department (paygrade; nationality irrelevant) and any friends or family they wished to bring along. In some ways these disparate settings - hospital office and lakeside backyard - reflect two sides of the same coin: at the microscope proffering knowledge, in the yard dispensing food and drink, at both Vincent Memoli happily engaged and generously sharing with others.

A former trainee of Dr. Memoli and current Geisel faculty member, Jason Pettus, M.D., recently summarized via Twitter thoughts that many who knew Vince share: “Those of us lucky enough to have learned pathology from Dr. Vince Memoli will be forever grateful for his boundless generosity, encyclopedic knowledge, & epic stories. A true master of general surgical pathology. A connoisseur of humanity. An irreplaceable mentor and friend.”

In pace requiescat. ■