

OBITUARY**In Memoriam: Sharon B. Murphy, MD (1943–2023)**

It is an overworked term, but Sharon was truly a giant in the world of pediatric oncology. Her vigor was legendary; no one could out-work her. Her many leadership positions are listed below, but even as impressive as these were, they pale when compared to her influence on her colleagues. She was such a role model for many of us in the field of cancer research. No one who ever worked with her could ever forget her. She was a caring physician who impacted the lives of patients around the globe.

Sharon received her medical degree from Harvard University, in 1969, when curative therapies for leukemia were just being developed. She completed an internship and residency in pediatrics at the University of Colorado Medical Center and went to the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) for fellowship training. During her fellowship, she became interested in non-Hodgkin's lymphoma (NHL) and developed what became known as the Murphy Staging System.

Sharon began her academic career at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, where she continued her research on NHL. She is credited with developing Total Therapy B for advanced Burkitt lymphoma, which resulted in an overall 80% cure rate of children with a malignancy that was previously uniformly fatal. Sharon also understood the importance of risk-adapted treatment and showed that the intensity and duration of treatment for patients with favorable, localized lymphomas could be reduced. While risk-adapted treatment is considered standard today, in the 1970s all children with lymphoma were treated with high doses of combination therapy, leading to significant toxicity and adverse events. Sharon also conducted seminal research in acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL). Her studies investigating immunophenotype, karyotype, and ploidy led to improved classification and stratification for risk-adapted ALL protocols.

Sharon was recruited in 1988 to serve as the Chief of the Division of Hematology/Oncology at Children's Memorial Hospital and as a Professor of Pediatrics at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine Division. In 1992, she was elected Chair of the Pediatric Oncology Group (POG). During her tenure as Chair, several landmark studies were conducted that improved the survival of patients with pediatric cancer. In addition, tumor biobanks and reference labs were established that advanced our understanding of tumor biology and led to the discovery of new biomarkers that

refined risk-adapted treatment strategies. Importantly, under her leadership in POG, the next generation of pediatric oncology leaders were developed.

Sharon also played a leadership role in the merger of the four major pediatric cooperative groups to form the Children's Oncology Group (COG) in 2000. In 2002, Sharon founded the Greehey Children's Cancer Research Institute in San Antonio and served as director until 2008. After nearly 40 years of working and conducting research in pediatric oncology, Sharon accepted a Scholar-in-Residence position with the Institute of Medicine (IOM). During her tenure at the IOM, she worked on a broad range of issues relating to national cancer policy and health services research.

Sharon was a prolific author, and she received many awards and honors including the ASCO Distinguished Service Award for Scientific Leadership in 2005, the American Society of Pediatric Hematology and Oncology (ASPHO) Distinguished Career Award in 2009, and the Pediatric Oncology Award by the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) in 2010. Throughout her distinguished career, Sharon found time to share her leadership skills and research expertise with younger investigators, and she impacted the career of so many.

Sharon retired to Las Vegas about a decade ago to live near her son, daughter-in-law, and grandchildren. She played golf and pickle ball and enjoyed traveling with her family to vacations in Hawaii. She continued to serve as a mentor in retirement by reminding us that there is more to life than work.



Figure legend: Dr. Sharon B. Murphy (November 19, 1943 to November 4, 2023)

Susan L. Cohn¹ 

Vita Land²

Michael P. Link³

Holcombe E. Grier⁴

¹Department of Pediatrics, University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois, USA

²Department of Pediatrics, Northwestern University, Chicago, Illinois, USA

³Department of Pediatrics, Stanford University School of Medicine,
Stanford, California, USA

⁴Dana-Farber/Boston Children's Cancer and Blood Disorders Center,
Boston, Massachusetts, USA

Correspondence

Susan L. Cohn, Department of Pediatrics, University of Chicago, 900 E
57th St, KCBD 5100, Chicago, IL 60637, USA.

Email: scohn@bsd.uchicago.edu

ORCID

Susan L. Cohn  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5749-7650>