

Fred Plum, MD (Deceased)



Fred Plum, attending neurologist at New York Presbyterian Hospital and university professor at Weill Medical College of Cornell University, was, together with Holly Smith, one of the two progenitors of Essentials. Fred was a truly remarkable individual who had an exceptional mastery of the neurologic sciences, both basic and clinical. One could hardly imagine two more different personalities than Holly and Fred. As I mentioned above, Holly is a classic Southern gentleman. Fred was born and raised in Atlantic City, New Jersey, and carried with him the charming but demanding characteristics of a resident of that city.

Fred trained in medicine and neurology at New York Hospital and at the neurologic division of Bellevue Hospital. Subsequently, he became an instructor in medicine at Cornell University Medical College, then an assistant professor, associate professor, and professor of medicine (neurology) at the University of Washington School of Medicine, all between 1953 and 1963. In 1963, Fred became the Anne Parrish Titzell Professor and Chair of the Department of Neurology at Cornell University Medical College, a position he held for 31 years. After stepping down as chairman of neurology, he was recognized for his remarkable accomplishments by having been made a university professor at Weill Medical College of Cornell University in 1998.

Fred was a member of virtually all distinguished societies in internal medicine and in neurology. He held honorary doctorates from at least two medical schools, including the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm.

Fred was not only a spectacular clinician but an extraordinary teacher. His textbook, Diagnosis of Stupor and Coma, written together with J.B. Posner, is one of the classics of its field.

Fred, like Holly, recognized in the mid-1980s the need for providing a textbook which was sufficiently concise yet comprehensive to be usable by students, house staff, young physicians, and physicians outside his own discipline of neurology. I remember particularly well the editorial meetings in the early years of Essentials, involving Fred, Holly Smith, Chuck Carpenter, and myself. Fred's exceptional analytic reasoning, coupled with remarkable flexibility, was clearly a tutorial in how one deals with a pleomorphic group such as the four editors: flexibility on the one hand and an insistence on excellence on the other.

Holly and Fred were the two prime movers in the development of what was originally Cecil Essentials of Medicine and is now titled Andreoli and Carpenter's Cecil Essentials of Medicine. Medical students, residents in internal medicine, young physicians, and others interested in internal medicine owe a great deal to Holly and Fred for their vision in generating the notion of Essentials.

And the other editors of Essentials owe Holly and Fred a great debt for tutoring us in how one assembles a textbook of internal medicine.

Thomas E. Andreoli, MD (Deceased)

Ivor J. Benjamin, MD, FACC, FAHA

Editors-in-Chief