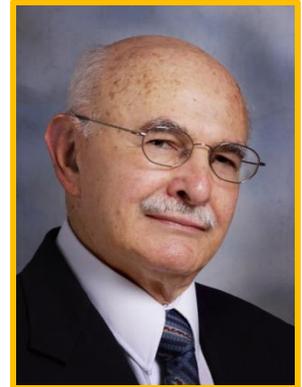


Norman Jaffe, MD talks about The Human Side of medicine

Dr. Jaffe came to MD Anderson in 1978 to join the faculty of the Department of Pediatrics. He served as Chief of the Pediatric Outpatient Clinic (1992-1994) and Chief of the Long-Term Surveillance Clinic for Pediatric Patients Cured of Cancer (1996-2000). He retired in 2006 and holds Emeritus status. In an interview conducted in 2012, he talks about his empathy for the parents of ill children and the sense of gratification he has gotten from his relationships with patient and with families.



A Commitment to Patients and Their Parents

I do go to synagogue, to shul, every week, and my wife runs a kosher home and has brought our children up as such. We believe very deeply in our faith. In fact, I will tell you something. I lost a child at the age of twelve. I was advised to take her to the Mayo Clinic, where an operation was performed and she died two days later. I know how people feel when they lose a child. I'll tell you something: no matter what the psychiatrists and psychologists and everyone tell you that you'll overcome the problem, you never do.... and when I've lost a patient, I know how my parents feel. I have insisted, while I was in practice, that any patient of mine who dies, even in the middle of the night, I must be summoned to that patient's bedside. I've risen from my bed in the middle of the night, 3 o'clock in the morning, to speed to the hospital for a dead child so that I can sit and talk to the parents and comfort them and tell them that, above all everything that could be done was done for their child, that they must not feel in any way guilty, or have any other feelings about that situation. And this is not only because of my own personal loss. I think my religious experiences have stimulated me and induced me to do that as well.

I'll tell you this much. Some of the greatest relationships that I have had and still continue to have are the friendship and the support I have from the parents of deceased patients. They write to me every year. They come to Houston to see me every year. When I retired, I would say about twenty percent of the participants in the retirement party were parents who flew in from various parts of the country to bid me farewell and to thank me for what I had done. I really felt embarrassed about the situation, that they came from Boston, they came from Los Angeles, Ohio. Those friendships money cannot buy, and they will be with me forever.

This interview clip was taken from an in-depth interview conducted for the Making Cancer History Voices Oral History Project. This ongoing project currently contains almost 400 interview hours with MD Anderson institution builders.

The transcript has been edited from the original.

The content is available for all uses.

To explore the full interview go to: <http://mdanderson.libguides.com/JaffeN>

About the speaker:

Dr. Norman Jaffe (b. 25 September 1933, Johannesburg, South Africa) came to MD Anderson in 1978 to become Chief of the Section of Solid Tumors in the Department of Pediatrics. His research has focused on clinical treatments for solid tumors, the long-term effects of chemotherapy and radiation therapy on developing bodies, and the psychosocial challenges of long-term survivors. From 1992-'94 he served as Chief of the Pediatric Outpatient Clinic and from 1996-2000 he was Chief of the Long Term Surveillance Clinic for Pediatric Patients Cured of Cancer. Dr. Jaffe retired in 2006 and holds the title of Professor Emeritus of Children's Cancer Hospital at MD Anderson Cancer Center.

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