

Gold Medalist Tribute • Daniel C. Sullivan, MD

Introduction by Bruce J. Hillman, MD

Daniel C. Sullivan, MD, has had a remarkable and atypical career. Dan started out conventionally enough. He was an undergraduate at Brown and then received his medical degree from the University of Vermont. After radiology residency and nuclear medicine fellowship at Yale, Dan practiced nuclear medicine as an assistant professor at Yale and then at Duke, where he was on faculty from 1978 to 1994. While at Duke, Dan did a part-time “sabbatical” in psychiatry—he completed a psychiatry residency and passed the board exam, he says, “so I could better understand why the world worked the way it did.” Returning to radiology in 1984, Dan developed an expertise in breast imaging, leading Duke’s Division of Mammography until 1991, when he assumed a larger administrative role as Director of Imaging. In 1994, Dan accepted a position at Penn to more fully pursue his interests in breast imaging.

Dan might have continued his career in this vein. He was productive and successful. In 1997, however, when the National Cancer Institute (NCI) decided that the time to address medical imaging had finally arrived, Dan competed for and won the position of Associate Director, Division of Cancer Treatment and Diagnosis, and head of what became the Cancer Imaging Program (CIP). At long last, radiology had an advocate on the inside. Dan made the most of it on behalf of all of us.

His 10 years at NCI were nothing short of revolutionary. He converted to true believers an initially skeptical NCI hierarchy, many of whom openly voiced that radiologists were incapable of doing “real research.” He managed this extraordinary feat by both his considerable political skills and the programs he developed. Dan grew the CIP “from the ground up” to a productive organization that took medical imaging research at NCI from a sleepy \$47 million in grants and contracts in 1997 to more than \$180 million when he left NCI in 2007. Examples of successful programs Dan developed and pushed through the competitive NCI environment included basic and translational research programs

like the In Vivo Cellular and Molecular Imaging Centers and the Small Animal Imaging Resource Program project grants. He was responsible for the initiation of core funding for the Imaging Response Assessment Teams (IRATs), intended to better involve radiologists with cancer centers. By securing funding for key conferences on imaging sponsored by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and by leading the development of initiatives like the Interagency Council for Biomedical Imaging in Oncology (ICBIO) and the NIH Biomarkers Consortium, Dan raised the profile of medical imaging throughout the NIH.



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Dan’s efforts not only benefited imaging, but also radiologists fortunate enough to grasp Dan’s rapidly moving coattails. The NCI’s vast new investment in imaging research made some big-time careers. I know. Mine was one of them. One of Dan’s earliest efforts was to secure major funding for a new clinical trials “network.” The network became the American College of Radiology Imaging Network (ACRIN). Founding, developing, and leading ACRIN for its first 9 years was the most creative and rewarding experience of my career. The continuing success of ACRIN,

including the infrastructure for rigorous clinical research it provides our specialty, would not have been possible without Dan’s continuously watching over us and providing support at critical junctures.

Since 2007, Dan has split his time between being science advisor to the RSNA and professor of radiology at Duke, where he is responsible for designing the transition to a campus-wide imaging program. In these roles, Dan continues to advance our specialty and develop the research careers of radiologists. He’s a very special individual. Wherever he’s gone, Dan has attracted the respect and affection of those he leads. A lot of what made ACRIN so much fun for me was working closely with Dan. That psychiatry training has come in handy.

For who he is and for what he’s done to expand the research horizons of our specialty, the AUR honors Daniel C. Sullivan, MD, with its 2009 Gold Medal.