

## Living legend in surgery: professor Walter Randolph Chitwood Jr

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Received: 19 November 2015; Accepted: 26 November 2015; Published: 08 December 2015.

doi: 10.3978/j.issn.2221-2965.2015.12.03

View this article at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3978/j.issn.2221-2965.2015.12.03>

*Journal of Visualized Surgery (JOVS)* has the honor to include Prof. Walter Randolph Chitwood Jr (*Figure 1*) as a distinguished member of our editorial board. Recognized as the first heart surgeon to perform robot-assisted mitral valve surgery in the US, Prof. Chitwood holds an unparalleled reputation in the cardiac surgery field with his more-than-40 years surgical and research experience, which we believe is an essential part of the further development of *JOVS*.

Owing to his incomparable expertise and boundless passion, Prof. Chitwood has enjoyed great honor throughout his whole career. A native of Virginia, Prof. Chitwood is the son and grandson of “Southwestern Virginia mountain doctors and nurses”. After graduating from Hampden-Sydney College and received his medical degree from the University of Virginia, Prof. Chitwood completed the 10-year general and cardiothoracic surgical residency program at Duke University under Dr. David C. Sabiston. As the first house staff member there to be selected to Alpha Omega Alpha, he then was selected to begin and head the new cardiac surgery program at the East Carolina University School of Medicine. Except for a 2-year hiatus as the Chief of Cardiothoracic Surgery at the University of Kentucky, Prof. Chitwood has contributed his entire career at East Carolina University. Serving as Chairman of the Department of Surgery from 1995 to 2003, Prof. Chitwood, in July 2003, was promoted to Senior Associate Vice Chancellor to be in charge of the development of a new specialty hospital and research institute—The East Carolina Heart Institute (ECHI). He received a Doctor of Science, honoris causa in 2005 from his alma mater, Hampden-Sydney College. In 2007, as founder and Director of ECHI, he was named the Eddie and Jo Allison Smith Distinguished Chair. The institute now includes an integrated Department of Cardiovascular Sciences as well as a heart hospital, outpatient, research, and education center. The Robotic



**Figure 1** Professor Walter Randolph Chitwood Jr.

Surgical Center at East Carolina University has trained over 450 surgeons worldwide. Prof. Chitwood performed the first robotic mitral valve operation in the United States and ten countries. He also took the responsibility of being the principal investigator of the FDA robotic mitral valve trials that led to approval for this use in the United States. In early 2015, he retired from East Carolina University and is currently a Visiting Professor at the University of Virginia as well as a consultant in the field of valve technologies and innovations. However, Prof. Chitwood still keeps his passion in the field of heart surgery, giving numerous lectures and participating in plenty of surgery meetings nationally and internationally.

In addition to his impressive career experience, Prof. Chitwood is well-known for his important role as member

of 25 professional societies, including the American College of Surgeons, the Royal College of Surgeons of England, the American Association for Thoracic Surgery, the Society of Thoracic Surgeons, the Southern Thoracic Surgical Association, the Society of University Surgeons, the American Surgical Association, the American College of Cardiology and the Cardiac Surgery Biology Club. He was also past-president of the Society of Thoracic Surgeons, the International Society of Minimally Invasive Cardiothoracic Surgery, the International Society for Heart Valve Disease, and the North Carolina Chapter of the American Heart Association.

For the academic contribution, Prof. Chitwood as well led an active role. Joining the editorial board of the *JOVS* in early 2015, Prof. Randolph Chitwood has also dedicated himself to editorial boards of the many other world-known journals, including the *Annals of Thoracic Surgery*, the *Journal of Cardiothoracic and Vascular Surgery*, the *Journal of Cardiac Surgery*, the *Journal of Heart Valve Disease*, the *Asian Annals of Cardiovascular and Thoracic Surgery*, the *Cardiothoracic Surgery Network (CTSNet)*, *Chest*, the *American Heart Journal*, and the *Journal of Robotic Surgery*. He has authored over 220 peer reviewed scientific and clinical articles, as well as many book chapters and several monographs. Prof. Chitwood has given over 60 invited lectures till now and has just published the *Atlas of Robotic Cardiac Surgery*.

Specialized in cardiothoracic surgery, Prof. Chitwood dedicated his career to Aortic Root Reconstruction Complex, Coronary Revascularization, Minimally Invasive Cardiac Surgery, Mitral and Aortic Valve Repair and Reconstruction, Surgical Robotics/Robotic Cardiac Surgery Valvular, Heart Disease, Robotic Engineering and Myocardial Preservation. According with his accomplishments in cardiac surgery field, Prof. Chitwood has been awarded numerous prestigious awards. Being elected to Fellowship in the Royal College of Surgeons of England in 2003, he received the O. Max Gardner Award

in 2004 from the University of North Carolina Board of Governors that recognizes a faculty member, who during the scholastic year, made the greatest contribution to the “welfare of the human race”. In following year, he received the national Mended Hearts-Harken Award, which recognizes excellence in the field of cardiovascular medicine and received the National Phi Kappa Phi Scholar Award for outstanding teaching, research, practice, and service. In 2009, Prof. Chitwood received the Ellis Island Medal of Honor at Ellis Island for contributions to the health and welfare of diverse populations nationally and internationally. Later in 2012, he was awarded the Bakoulev Premium Medal from the Russian Academy of Medical Sciences and the Bakoulev Scientific Center for Cardiovascular Surgery for his work in minimally invasive cardiac procedures. In May 2015, the AATS Mitral Conclave Achievement Award was awarded to him for his accomplishments in the field of mitral valve surgery.

Except for the medical career, Prof. Chitwood holds lifelong avocations to photography, amateur radio, trout fishing, and antiquarian medical bibliophile. He has made many productive photographic expeditions to interesting places worldwide, the photographs of which have been shown through salon photographic exhibitions.

Since joining *JOVS*, Prof. Chitwood has taken his position on the editorial board seriously, working to expand its sphere of influence in the surgical community and bring *JOVS* to a higher level. We feel privileged to have such a good opportunity to work alongside him.

### Acknowledgements

None.

### Footnote

*Conflicts of Interest:* The author has no conflicts of interest to declare.

doi: 10.3978/j.issn.2221-2965.2015.12.03

**Cite this article as:** Gao S. Living legend in surgery: professor Walter Randolph Chitwood Jr. *J Vis Surg* 2015;1:22.