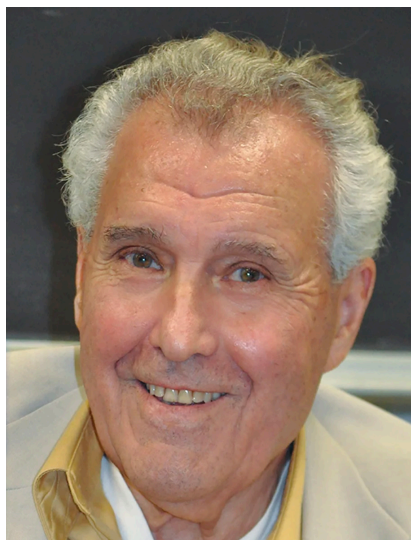


In Memoriam



Alfonse T. Masi, MD
1930-2025

Alfonse T. Masi passed away on March 6th 2025 at the age of 94 after a prestigious career spanning over six decades as an eminent ACR Rheumatologist, fully dedicated to the study and to the education of Rheumatic Diseases.

Al Masi earned his medical degree from Columbia University Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons in 1955 and subsequently completed residencies in internal medicine at both Johns Hopkins University and UCLA Medical Center. In addition to his medical training, he held the titles of Master of Public Health (1961) and Doctor of Public Health (1963) from the Johns Hopkins University School of Hygiene and Public Health.

Throughout his career, Al Masi was affiliated with the University of Illinois College of Medicine at Peoria, where he served as a Professor of Medicine and Epidemiology. He was awarded Professor Emeritus at the institution. Indeed, Al Masi has made significant contributions to Rheumatology, particularly in the areas of ankylosing spondylitis and rheumatoid arthritis, with over 220 publications to his name.

In particular, he pioneered clinical-epidemiological research of rheumatic diseases and his epidemiologic orientation provided a framework for studying the causation of the diseases. His work also helped differentiate fibromyalgia from other painful disorders.

In 1999, together with his European colleagues (his “Musket-eers”), he established the new and intriguing area of Neuroendocrine Immunology of the Rheumatic Diseases (NEIRD) and founded a productive Study Group at the ACR. He organised and authored several meetings and manuscripts on NEIRD. In addition, Al Masi was an active member of the Editorial Board of several scientific journals in the US and Europe. His last paper was published in September 2024 in *Clinical and Experimental Rheumatology* where he served for more than 3 decades as a member of the Board.

In recognition of his contributions, he received numerous awards, including the Osler House Latchkey Award from Johns Hopkins Hospital in 2017 and the Townsend Harris Award from The City University of New York in 2016. He was also a Master of the ACR, a title bestowed on him in 2000.

In addition to his clinical and academic endeavours, Dr Masi and his wife, Nancy donated \$1.2 million to establish an endowed chair at the Department of Medicine at the University of Illinois

College of Medicine at Peoria, underscoring their commitment to advancing medical education and research.

On this occasion, the Dean of the University commented: “Dr Masi knows firsthand the importance of research and scholastic activity in attracting and retaining the best and brightest faculty physicians. In turn, our faculty educate and train future physicians who go on to treat and provide care for innumerable patients”.

After his retirement, Al did not intend to leave research behind, and said: “I want to re-establish my databases at home and with collaborators so I can continue to work with students and junior faculty”.

As a matter of fact, many of these young scholars credit him with their success in their careers and with their lifelong interest in research. Al Masi had dedicated much time to sorting dozens of binders of data from decades of research so new generations of researchers will be continuing his work.

When recently interviewed, he affirmed: “All I can say is that the effort I put in has been genuine and dedicated.”

Al Masi was always surrounded by a wonderful wife, Nancy, and their four children, Dr Christopher Masi, Dr Anthony Masi, Amy Masi Schauwecker, and Maria Masi-Kammerer, with their large families and grandchildren.

For his younger colleagues he was a real ‘mentor and father’ and his memory will always be linked to a mix of pure friendship and genuine interest in the progression of the clinical sciences without any limitation or prejudice. His friends agree that: “With Al we had very special professional and personal relationships because he was always helpful, never arrogant, never evil, always peaceful and stimulating and deeply knowing”.

We have all been fortunate to have spent a great deal of time with him when we had the occasion to meet and appreciate his real ‘Maestro’ style.

*M. Cutolo and S. Bombardieri,
on behalf of R. Straub, J.W.J. Bijlsma and F. Buttgeriet*

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