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A Tribute to Dr. Robert Wagenaar

The rehabilitation community has lost a talented and much-beloved colleague. Dr. Robert C. Wagenaar passed away after a brief cardiac-related illness on February 13, 2013. Dr. Wagenaar was a well-respected scientist, thoughtful mentor, and a cherished friend to many of his colleagues. A skilled scientist, highly regarded for his work in dynamical systems theory, he studied gait patterns in patients with stroke and Parkinson's disease, and investigated rehabilitation interventions to modify abnormal movement patterns. He was the essence of a translational research scientist, transforming theory to clinical practice in rehabilitation. Dr. Wagenaar was also a devoted educator and mentor to many graduate students, post-doctoral students, and junior colleagues. His mentees have emerged as leaders in their own areas of work. At the ACRM | American Congress of Rehabilitation Medicine, Dr. Wagenaar served as co-chair of the Program Committee from 2010 to the present and was instrumental in dramatically improving the caliber of scientific presentations at the annual meeting. He was also a beloved husband to his wife Maud, father to son, Reyn and daughter, Carlijn, and a dear friend and colleague to many. He will be missed for the many contributions he made to our lives and work.



RESTON, Virginia – The rehabilitation community has lost a talented and much-beloved colleague. Dr. Robert C. Wagenaar passed away after a brief cardiac-related illness on February 13, 2013. Robert was a well-respected scientist, thoughtful mentor, and a cherished friend to many of his colleagues.

Robert earned his PhD in Human Movement Sciences at Vrije University, Amsterdam. He joined the faculty of Boston University, Sargent College of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, in 2001, and was appointed chair and professor of the Department of Physical Therapy and Athletic Training in 2005. Robert and his family recently returned to Holland, where he took on a new role as professor and department chair in Clinical Health Sciences at the University Medical Center in Utrecht.

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Robert was also a devoted educator and mentor to many graduate students, post-doctoral students, and junior colleagues. His mentees have emerged as leaders in their own areas of work. Robert was also a beloved husband to his wife Maud, father to son, Reyn and daughter, Carlijn, and a dear friend and colleague to many.



Robert came to ACRM as a volunteer by way of our, then annual meeting partner ASNR. From 2010 to the present, he served as co-chair of the Program Committee. He was instrumental in dramatically improving the caliber of scientific presentations at the annual meeting.

Long-time colleague and fellow Program Committee co-chair, Virginia Mills, remembers Robert this way, "Robert loved what he did. He had a passion and you could just feel it being with him. Most of all, he was a real gentleman. He was kind and always went out of his way to acknowledge others. I always felt so appreciated by him."

Most remarkable about Robert was his approachable and engaging demeanor. Colleagues were naturally drawn to his enthusiastic support and respect for good science.

"In all of my interactions with Robert, I never observed a time when he and his company were not positively enjoying the moment," noted Jon Lindberg, ACRM Chief Executive Officer. "Robert was always patient, yet continued to have high expectations for himself, his work, and the professional community."

Susan Fasoli, fellow ACRM Program Committee member, perhaps summed up best the sentiment shared by many of Robert's colleagues: "He was an excellent scientist, researcher and mentor, who took a genuine interest in both teaching and learning with others. He was a true gentleman, loving father and husband, who enjoyed a good laugh over a cold beer."



Many people will mourn the loss of Robert. His family will miss him most of all. We hope they will take comfort in the fact that so many friends and colleagues will miss him, too, for the many contributions he made to our lives and work.

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