

Basil A. Pruitt, Jr., M.D. – A founding father of modern trauma and burn medicine, revolutionizing the care of critically ill or injured patients around the world.

Special Honor: BioMed SA Lifetime Achievement Award



Dr. Basil Pruitt

Clinical Professor, Department of Surgery, UT Health San Antonio and former longtime Commander and Director, U.S. Army Institute of Surgical Research. Colonel (Retired), U.S. Army.

Selection committee rationale:

- Developed a long-distance transfer system during the Vietnam War that laid the foundation for modern critical care air transport.
- Positioned the U.S. Army Institute of Surgical Research as a global model for translating scientific research into dramatic improvements in care.
- Pioneered transformative innovations in military medicine that have been assimilated into civilian medical practice, with significant reductions in death and complication rates.
- Longtime editor of the *Journal of Trauma* and numerous other peer-reviewed publications.
- Internationally recognized for his contributions with numerous awards, prizes and leadership positions.
- Enduring legacy of mentorship, creating a new generation of leaders in medicine.

As one of the “founding fathers” of modern trauma and burn medicine, Dr. Basil Pruitt’s lifetime of innovation and passion for improving patient care is unparalleled. His innovations in biomedical research, clinical burn and trauma care, organizational leadership, and mentorship have quite literally changed history by revolutionizing the management of trauma, burns, and critically ill or injured patients worldwide.

For the past half-century, as Commander and Director of the U.S. Army Institute for Surgical Research for 27 years and subsequently as a Clinical Professor in UT Health San Antonio’s Department of Surgery, Dr. Pruitt has had a transformational impact on an international scale, pioneering a multitude of innovations that have dramatically advanced medical practice and improved patient care. These innovations include the pioneering use of burn wound biopsies, cohort nursing, high-frequency interrupted flow ventilation for inhalation injuries, and extensive characterization of metabolic stress and endocrine responses in burn patients, leading to today’s understanding of metabolic support of critically ill patients.

Dr. Pruitt served 37 years as Associate Editor and then Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Trauma* and on the editorial boards of 18 other journals around the world. He himself has published the largest number of top-cited, peer-reviewed articles on burn care over the past 55 years. He was elected president of 10 surgical societies, including the American Burn Association, the American Surgical Association, and the International Society for Burn Injury. He has received numerous national and international honors including Lifetime Achievement Awards from the Society of University Surgeons and the American Burn Association. He was co-winner of the 2008 King Faisal International Prize for Medicine and was named an Icon in Surgery in 2017 by the American College of Surgeons. He has also been honored by his alma mater, Tufts Medical School, as one of its 10 most influential graduates of all time and was recently named the inaugural Emeritus Fellow of the National Trauma Institute. Perhaps his most enduring legacy is his mentorship of physicians and scientists who have gone on to become international leaders in medicine. Among them are 46 directors of burn centers in the US and abroad, 23 department chairs, 11 past presidents of the American Burn Association and numerous other leaders in the field.

Dr. Pruitt graduated from Harvard College in 1952 and received his M.D. degree from Tufts University School of Medicine in 1957. He began his surgical residency at Boston City Hospital, but in 1959 was drafted and began a lifelong affiliation with the Army’s burn center when assigned to the U.S. Army Surgical Research Unit at Fort Sam Houston. After a year’s tour in Vietnam, where he served as Chief of Professional Services at the 12th Evacuation Hospital and Chief of the Trauma Research Team, he returned to the burn center now called the U.S. Army Institute of Surgical Research as Commander and Director. He retired from the Medical Corps in 1995 and accepted a faculty position as Clinical Professor of Surgery at UT Health San Antonio, where he holds the Dr. Ferdinand P. Herff Chair in Surgery. He has held an appointment as Professor of Surgery at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences since 1978.