John P. McGovern Award for 2013

HCMS Honors Dr. Walter J. Pories with the Prestigious John P. McGovern Compleat Physician Award

Houston, TX (Jan. 25, 2013)...The Harris County Medical Society (HCMS), the professional association for Harris County physicians, and the Houston Academy of Medicine (HAM), the scientific and charitable organization of HAM physicians, honored renowned surgeon, educator and international leader in research Walter J. Pories, MD, with the John P. McGovern Compleat Physician Award. The award was presented to him Jan. 18, at the HCMS/HAM Installation of Officers & Leadership Recognition.

The John P. McGovern Compleat Physician Award is a national award presented annually by HAM to recognize a multi-accomplished physician who exemplifies the Oslerian ideals of medical excellence, humane and ethical care, commitment to medical humanities and writing, research, and harmony between the academician and medical practitioner. These characteristics were demonstrated by the life of Sir William Osler, who is revered as the "Father of Modern American Medicine." The award is named after its first recipient, John P. McGovern, MD, who founded the American Osler Society.

Throughout his career, Dr. Pories has embodied the Oslerian ideals. He is a leading and highly respected surgeon with an international reputation as an inspiring educator and researcher. Dr. Pories is a professor of surgery, professor of biochemistry, director of The Metabolic Institute, chair of the Laupus Library at East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina, and an adjunct professor of surgery at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences in Bethesda, Maryland.

A native of Germany and a Holocaust survivor, Dr. Pories obtained his bachelor's degree from Wesleyan University in Connecticut and his medical degree from the University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry in 1955. Upon graduation, he enlisted in the U.S. Air Force and was stationed at the Strong Memorial Hospital in Rochester, New York, for his residency in general and cardio-thoracic surgery in 1962. His leadership roles have included, serving as the chief of Surgery at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base for five years during the Vietnam War, chief of Surgical Oncology at the University of Rochester, chief of Surgery at the Cleveland Metropolitan General Hospital, and vice chair of the Department of Surgery at Case Western Reserve University. In 1977, he became the first chair of the Department of Surgery at East Carolina University's new medical school, which he chaired for 19 years.

He has been an active surgeon with a large practice in pediatric, thoracic and oncologic surgery. Dr. Pories has won the East Carolina University's Lifetime Research Award in recognition of his achievements and his discoveries: 1) Zinc's importance as an essential nutrient for life in animals and man; and 2) Conclusive results that the Greenville Gastric Bypass, a surgery he modified, results in durable weight loss but also causes a long-term remission of type 2 diabetes, previously considered a hopeless disease.

In recognition of his contribution in the treatment of obesity and diabetes as well as his work in nutrition, Dr. Pories has received many awards, including the TOPS Award from the Obesity Society, the Outstanding Achievement Award from the American Society for Bariatric Surgery Foundation, the Barry Goldwater Service Medal, and the McLester Award in Nutrition. He has served in various roles of numerous societies. He has been the president of: the Society for Geochemistry and Environmental Health; the American Society for Bariatric Surgery; North Carolina Surgical Association; the North Carolina Chapter of the American College of Surgeons; and Cleveland Vascular Society. He is the senior editor for two journals dedicated to obesity surgery as well as the founder and former medical director of a summer camp for obese children.

Consistently innovative, Dr. Pories was one of the founding members of the Surgical Review Corporation, in which he served as the founding Chairman of the Board. The mission of this nonprofit is to identify bariatric centers on the basis of outcomes, to be certified as ASMBS Bariatric Surgery Centers of Excellence. As of May 2011, 450 U.S. hospitals had earned the designation as Centers of Excellence, 800 surgeons had been fully approved, and seven countries had adopted the program.

Dr. Pories is a legendary teacher. For 12 years, he served as the president of the Association of Program Directors in Surgery. For eight years, he participated and chaired the Committee for International Scholars of the American College of Surgeons. He also is the recipient of the highly prestigious O. Max Gardner Award, the highest honor given by the University of North Carolina Board of Governors. The graduating classes of East Carolina University honored him as a Pearl Speaker from 1983 to 2004, at which time he asked to retire from competition.

With his accomplishments and leadership in education, clinical care, research, and being a role model for the next generation in the humanities, Dr. Walter Pories has embodied the remarkable traditions of Sir. William Osler. Dr. Pories personifies the Compleat Physician.
Past recipients of the John P. McGovern Compleat Physician Award are: John P. McGovern, MD (1993); Raymond Scalettar, MD (1994); Ernest W. Johnson, MD (1995); Donald W. Chapman, MD (1996); Theodore E. Woodward, MD (1997); Charles D. Sherman, MD (1998); Michael E. DeBakey, MD (1999); Victor McKusick, MD (2000); W. Walter Menninger, MD (2001); Robert L. DuPont, MD (2002); Denton A. Cooley, MD (2003); Jack P. Strong, MD (2004); John Bilezikian, MD (2005); Kathleen M. Foley, MD (2006); Ralph E. Feigin, MD (2007); Stanley H. Appel, MD (2008); Richard O’Reilly, MD (2009); Raymond H. Kaufman, MD (2010); and Dev GnanaDev, MD (2011); and Richard Wenzel, MD (2012).

The Harris County Medical Society, established in 1903, is the professional society for physicians in Harris County. It is the largest county medical society in the nation, with a membership of more than 11,000 physicians and medical students. Its mission is to be the leading advocate for its member physicians, their patients and the community, in promoting the highest standards of ethical medical practice, access to quality medical care, medical education, research, and community health. In 1915, HCMS incorporated the Houston Academy of Medicine to support the community service, education, scientific and charitable programs for physicians, their patients, and the community at large in Harris County.