

2011 Recipient of the Margaret L. Kripke Legend Award

Edward J. Benz, Jr., M.D.

President, Dana-Farber Cancer Institute

Director, Dana-Farber/Harvard Cancer Center

Richard and Susan Smith Professor of Medicine, Harvard Medical School

Professor of Pediatrics, Harvard Medical School

Professor of Pathology, Harvard Medical School



Edward J. Benz, Jr., M.D., was selected as the 2011 recipient of MD Anderson's Margaret L. Kripke Legend Award for Promotion of Women in Cancer Medicine and Cancer Science. Benz is president and chief executive officer of Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, CEO of Dana-Farber/Partners Cancer Care as well as Principal Investigator and Director of Dana-Farber/Harvard Cancer Care and a member of the Governing Board of Dana-Farber/Children's Hospital Cancer Center. He is the Richard and Susan Smith Professor of Medicine and a Professor of Pediatrics and a Professor of Pathology and faculty dean for Oncology at Harvard Medical School. Benz is a graduate of Princeton University and Harvard Medical School, where his medical school thesis, completed at Children's Hospital, won the Soma Weiss and Leon Resnick Awards for research. An internationally recognized hematologist, Dr. Benz received his training at Brigham and Women's Hospital, the National Institutes of Health, and the Yale School of Medicine. Board certified in Internal Medicine and Hematology, Dr. Benz is a clinically active internist and expert in inherited anemias and diseases of the red cell.

Dr. Benz has enjoyed a distinguished career in academic internal medicine. He was among the first to apply the emerging technologies of molecular genetics to the study of human disease. His early work, started in medical school, delineated the molecular defects responsible for reduced hemoglobin synthesis in common inherited anemias called the thalassemias. Since that time, he and his laboratory group have made major contributions to our understanding of the molecular basis of hemoglobinopathies; the structure, function and regulation of genes encoding the NaK-ATPase; and, more recently, the biogenesis and molecular pathology of the red cell membrane cytoskeleton. He continues to be an active NIH funded investigator.

Dr. Benz took his first faculty position in the Department of Medicine at Yale where he was appointed Chief of the Division of Hematology in 1987. Immediately prior to assuming the presidency of Dana-Farber, he was the Chairman of the Department of Medicine at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and the Sir William Osler Professor of Medicine, one of the most distinguished positions in academic medicine in the United States. Dr. Benz has authored over 300 peer reviewed articles, Reviews, chapters and abstracts. He is a co-editor of Hematology: Principles and Practice, widely regarded as one of the major textbooks on hematology published in the United States, the 19th edition of Principles and Practice of Medicine, and the fifth edition of the Oxford Textbook of Medicine for which he and his colleagues received the Royal Society of Authors Textbook Award. He is an associate editor of the New England Journal of Medicine.

Dr. Benz' accomplishments have been recognized by a number of distinctions, including membership in the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences and the American Academy of Arts and Science. He is a past president of the American Society of Hematology, the American Society of Clinical Investigation and the Association of American Cancer Institutes. In addition to numerous other NIH assignments, he chaired the NIH Director's Blue Ribbon Panel on the future of Intramural Clinical Research in 2003, co-chaired the NIH Advisory Board for Clinical Research and is currently the chair of the NHLBI working group on Sickle Cell Disease.

"I came to my first faculty job with a salary grant, no start-up package and Ed as a mentor—and that was a pretty good deal!," writes Nancy Berliner, M.D., chief, division of Hematology, Brigham And Women's Hospital, Harvard Medical School. "During the past 20 years, his mentorship has been critical to my career trajectory and my academic success."

"I credit Ed with developing my leadership skills and capabilities, which has shaped my career immensely. When Ed Benz left to become president of Dana-Farber, I was given the title of associate chair of the Department of Medicine. No woman in the past 100 years at Johns Hopkins has ever occupied this position," states Susan MacDonald, M.D., who continues to hold that title.

In her nomination letter, Gloria Sorensen, Ph.D., faculty vice president for faculty development at Dana-Farber writes: "Dr. Benz is an agent for change in creating an environment where women can flourish and fostering a culture that values the contributions of women." In 2007, Benz created a Faculty Development office at Dana-Farber and as result of his leadership, the number of women leaders there has increased. Before joining Dana-Farber, he made similar strides at Johns Hopkins.

"Undoubtedly, Dr. Benz's efforts have played a major role in the rapid increase in the number of women at Johns Hopkins promoted to associate professor and professor over the last 15 years," states David Hellmann, M.D., chair of Medicine, Johns Hopkins Bayview.

Dr. Benz received his award on March 24, 2011, at 4:00 p.m. in Hickey Auditorium (R11.1400) and presented a lecture titled "Applying Mentorship, Leadership and Power of Position to Enhancing the Career Development of Women Faculty."

