

KENTUCKY

Hiram C. Polk, Jr., MD

Commissioner

Kentucky Department for Public Health



Hiram Polk is a native of Jackson, Mississippi and alumnus of Millsaps College and Harvard Medical School. He served as the Ben A. Reid Professor and Chairman of Surgery at the University of Louisville from 1971-2005. Polk trained in surgery at Washington University in St. Louis and was a subsequent fellow at the Lister Institute of Preventive Medicine in London. His first academic appointment was at the University of Miami and he later became an associate professor and director of burn care and pediatric surgery at Jackson Memorial Hospital. In 1971, at the age of 35, he was recruited to the University of Louisville as chairman of surgery and oversaw the development of the department into a well-respected center for research and

surgical education.

Upon his retirement as chairman, the University of Louisville, Department of Surgery was endowed and re-dedicated as the Hiram C. Polk Department of Surgery and an endowed chair was established in his name. While chair at Louisville, Polk trained more than 400 surgical residents, all of whom achieved board certification in general surgery. Some of the surgical residents have become academic surgery chairs and leaders at medical schools in the United States and some overseas. Numerous distinguished overseas surgeons have achieved advanced academic degrees under his supervision in the Price Institute of Surgical Research in Louisville.

Polk is known for his pioneering research on proper surgical antibiotic use to reduce surgical site infections, burn care, concepts in treatment of malignant melanoma, surgical oncology, hiatal hernia and reflux esophagitis treatment, trauma surgery and systems development, and many contributions in the development of contemporary surgical training methods and models. He is a recipient of the University of Louisville Lifetime Distinguished Service Award for his contributions to education. He was similarly recognized by the Surgical Infection Society and the Society of University of Surgeons. Polk has served as chair of the Residency Review Committee (ACGME), and the Veterans Affairs Merit Review Board. He has served as president for a number of associations, including the American Surgical Association, Society of University Surgeons, Society of Surgical Oncology, the International Surgical Group, Society for Surgery of the Alimentary Tract, Kentucky Surgical Society, Foundation for Biomedical Research, the Association for Academic Surgery, Louisville Surgical Society, Southeastern Surgical Congress, and the Kentucky Division of the American Cancer Society, among others.

In 1995, he was inducted as an honorary fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, Scotland, the oldest surgical college in the world. Subsequently he was designated an honorary fellow by Royal College of Surgeons (London) of England. Other distinctions include honorary fellowships in the Japan Surgical Society, the Society for Black Academic Surgeons, the Society of American Gastrointestinal and Endoscopic Surgeons (SAGES), and the Southern Surgical Association. He is also a distinguished service member of the American Association of Medical Colleges, and recipient of the Seale Harris Award from the Southern Medical Association and the Jakob Markowitz Award from the Academy of Surgical Research. Since 1963, he has authored or co-authored over 450 papers and journal articles, 152 textbook chapters and 11 books, including five editions of the classic text "Basic Surgery." He served as editor in chief from 1986-2004 of The American Journal of Surgery, and was feted with an unprecedented issue in his honor in August 2005.

Outside surgery and academics, he has presided over Goodwill Industries of Kentucky, as well as River Fields, Inc., a conservation land trust. His long time interests in horse racing has led to a directorship of the Grayson-Jockey Club Foundation (veterinarian research) and he is a current steward of The Jockey Club.