

## **In Memoriam**

**Donald “Don” Joseph Brunnquell, Ph.D. (1952-2023)**

**Pediatric Psychologist, Ethicist, Educator, and Clinical Consultant**



**Donald “Don” Joseph Brunnquell, Ph.D.** (1952-2023) was a true renaissance man, with multiple gifts and creative talents he shared with family, friends, and colleagues. A longstanding member of the Society of Pediatric Psychology, he coauthored (with William Rae, Ph.D.) the chapters on pediatric ethics in several editions of the *Handbook of Pediatric Psychology*. He also contributed in the early years of the Association for the Care of Children’s Health by serving on the Board of Directors 1987-90, 1992-95, and 1997-2000, and entertaining members with his music at various meetings. Indeed, his songwriting, poetry, and guitar playing were key components of his life and were important threads throughout his life and career, and forever memorable to those who loved and respected him.

A native of New Jersey from NJ, Don moved to the midwest to attend Lawrence University (Appleton WI). Dr. Brunnquell studied in Germany on a Fullbright Scholarship, and subsequently earned his Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from the University of Minnesota. He served his entire 36-year doctoral career in Minnesota, including internship and postdoctoral fellowship at then Minneapolis Children’s Medical Center 1977-81 as a staff psychologist. In 1984, he was appointed to be the Vice President for Human Ecology, a program he developed to review hospital policies affecting psychosocial experiences of children and their families. He pursued specialty training in Bioethics through a Bush Foundation Leadership Grant and served for the duration of his career as Resident Ethicist and Director, Office of Ethics at the now named Children’s Minnesota (serving both Minneapolis and St. Paul campuses). Beginning in 1992, he served as an Instructor at the

University of Minnesota and co-taught (with William Grove, Ph.D.) Ethics of Psychology and pediatric bioethics through the Center for Bioethics at the University of Minnesota, serving as a valued resource to medical practitioners state-wide. His service to the nationally accredited doctoral internship at Children's Minnesota through a monthly Ethics Seminar solely for interns was a huge enticement for doctoral candidates who benefitted from his expertise. His teaching, publications, and consultations further enhanced his status as an expert in the field of medical ethics. This expertise was the foundation for his selection by the American Psychological Association for the Lifetime Award for Accomplishments in Ethics Education in 2012 (<https://www.apa.org/about/awards/ethics-education>), an annual award for an APA member who demonstrates excellence in education of ethics, across all fields of psychology, with a focus on lifetime accomplishments in ethics education. As noted in one of his nomination letters, "Dr. Brunnquell is (and I'm not overstating here) one of the two best, and quite possibly the best, teacher of psychology I have ever met in my 36 years in the field. He has an encyclopedic knowledge of psychological ethics and bioethics, from which he imparts information to his students in a very enjoyable, well received manner."

Dr. Brunnquell's publications were many, with a few key citations listed at the end of this article. He was always thoughtful in his effort to teach all medical providers about ethics and ethical decision-making, never taking ownership of final decisions but helping all to trust their own decisions. Key co-authors highlight his stature among some of the best in our field, including Donald Bersoff, Kenneth Pope, Marian Hall, Siusan Phipps-Yonas, Patricia Keith-Spiegel, Byron Egeland, Daniel Kohen, and William Rae. As noted by Dr. Rae, he was "an elegant man with a philosophical bent."

Dr. Brunnquell was a unique mix of solid academic strengths and credentials along with a talented and creative musician and poet. He wrote poems set to music with his guitar for many of the hospital intern graduations. He knew how to entertain, add levity to any situation, and enjoy the music himself, with a preference for classical, folk, and bluegrass. He participated in poetry workshops and won the Mentor contest at the Loft Literary Center. His topics were broad and varied, and many considered his writing both powerful and playful, and he was featured in the Dickinson Poetry Series in Door County (<https://doorcountypulse.com/don-brunnquell-featured-dickinson-poetry-series/>). A crowd gathered for his own personal poetry reading at the Unity Unitarian Church that is worth listening to at this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5P-hwYLC6WI>.

Family and friends were very important to him, and he brought people together around music and poetry (but also loved calling square dances, playing the spoons, cheering University of Minnesota Gopher basketball, playing score sheet baseball, soccer, and

theater). He was a good neighbor, loved bike riding, and continued to enjoy playing soccer. After a brief time retired from his hospital position, Dr. Brunnquell was diagnosed in August 2022 with a duodenal cancer already metastasized to the liver. He underwent several rounds of chemotherapy along with immunotherapy but died on December 30, 2023, surrounded by family and the music he loved. As a friend wrote on his CaringBridge journal: “With support and in honor of a first-class neighbor and friend who helped us make it through the pandemic and other challenges with steadiness, laughter, and amazingly erudite sports talk.” A friend and colleague, Dr. Karen Wills, recalled, “I had several opportunities to consult with him on ethical issues and his counsel was so deeply thoughtful, thorough, and wise. He saw multiple facets of each situation, some of which I had utterly overlooked. He never oversimplified anything, but he could boil down a situation into a set of circumstances, and principles, that sometimes made the solutions seem simple and obvious even after you have been thrashing around in a dense fog for days.”

Don is survived by his lifelong partner, Sally Scoggins, who he met at the beginning of their first year of college in 1970, and their two sons, Mike and Will, and four grandchildren. Don delighted in his family and wrote many poems about them and for them. Sally noted: “He had a head full of song lyrics and hands ready to play the guitar any time. We were lucky to be here with a wonderful family, great colleagues, and a close community.”

### **Donald Brunnquell: List Publications**

Bersoff, D. N., Bernard, J. L., Jara, C. S., Pope, K. S., Tabachnick, B. G., Keith-Spiegel, P., Mannheim, C. I., Sancilio, M., Phipps-Yonas, S., Brunnquell, D., Somers, P., Farseth, G., Ninonuevo, F., Tymchuk, A. J., Drapkin, R., Major-Kingsley, S., Ackerman, A. B., Coffman, E. W., Baum, M. S., . . . Bajt, T. R. (2003). How ethics are applied. In D. N. Bersoff (Ed.), *Ethical conflicts in psychology (3rd ed.)* (pp. 75-122). American Psychological Association.

Brunnquell, A., Degirmenci, Ü., Kreil, S., Kornhuber, J., & Weih, M. (2011). Web-based application to eliminate five contraindicated multiple-choice question practices. *Evaluation & the Health Professions, 34*(2), 226-238. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163278710370459>

Brunnquell, D. (1987). Dying children. *Contemporary Psychology, 32*(2), 166-<https://doi.org/10.1037/026793>

Brunnquell, D. J. (1982). *Magical thinking as a developmental and clinical phenomenon* (616801479; 1983-50105-001).

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- Brunnquell, D., & Hall, M. D. (1982). Issues in the psychological care of pediatric oncology patients. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 52(1), 32-44. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1939-0025.1982.tb02662.x>
- Brunnquell, D., & Hall, M. D. (1983). Issues in the psychological care of pediatric oncology patients. *Annual Progress in Child Psychiatry & Child Development*, , 430-447.
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- Liaschenko, J., Oguz, N. Y., & Brunnquell, D. (2006). Critique of the "tragic case" method in ethics education. *Journal of Medical Ethics: Journal of the Institute of Medical Ethics*, 32(11), 672-677. <https://doi.org/10.1136/jme.2005.013060>
- Mannheim, C. I., Sancilio, M., Phipps-Yonas, S., Brunnquell, D., Somers, P., Farseth, G., & Ninonuevo, F. (2002). Ethical ambiguities in the practice of child clinical psychology. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 33(1), 24-29. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0735-7028.33.1.24>
- Mannheim, C. I., Sancilio, M., Phipps-Yonas, S., Brunnquell, D., Somers, P., Farseth, G., & Ninonuevo, F. (2008). Ethical ambiguities in the practice of child clinical psychology. In D. N. Bersoff (Ed.), *Ethical conflicts in psychology (4th ed.)* (pp. 91-97). American Psychological Association.
- Rae, W. A., Brunnquell, D., & Sullivan, J. R. (2003). Ethical and Legal Issues in Pediatric Psychology. In M. C. Roberts (Ed.), *Handbook of pediatric psychology (3rd ed.)* (pp. 32-49). The Guilford Press.
- Rae, W. A., Brunnquell, D., & Sullivan, J. R. (2009). Ethical and legal issues in pediatric psychology. In M. C. Roberts, & R. G. Steele (Eds.), *Handbook of pediatric psychology (4th ed.)* (pp. 19-34). The Guilford Press.

Rae, W. A., Worchel, F. F., & Brunnquell, D. (1995). Ethical and legal issues in pediatric psychology. In M. C. Roberts (Ed.), *Handbook of pediatric psychology (2nd ed.)* ( pp. 19-36). The Guilford Press.

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