



AT THE FOREFRONT
UChicago
**Medicine &
Biological
Sciences**

Mark E. Anderson, MD, PhD
*Paul and Allene Russell Professor
Dean of the Division of the Biological Sciences
and the Pritzker School of Medicine
Executive Vice President for Medical Affairs*

May 24, 2024

Dear Members of the U.S. House of Representatives,

It is a great honor and privilege to endorse the legislation to posthumously bestow the Congressional Gold Medal to Joseph B. Kirsner, MD, PhD.

Kirsner was an internationally respected physician, a renowned gastroenterologist, and a distinguished scientist and teacher. With his seminal contributions, Kirsner transformed the field of gastroenterology. He was a pioneer in understanding the nature and treatment of inflammatory bowel disease and was one of the first to show the increased risk of colon cancer in patients with ulcerative colitis. He published more than 750 papers and six editions of his authoritative textbook, *Inflammatory Bowel Disease*.

His peers—outstanding doctors in their own right—were awed by Kirsner’s devotion to his patients. After nearly 70 years in the practice of medicine, Kirsner wrote in a 2002 *Journal of the American Medical Association* essay, “I cannot condone the diminished sensitivity of physicians to patients.” His dedication to patient care was legendary. Kirsner was also instrumental in the mentorship and training of more than 200 of the field’s leading specialists.

World War II forced Kirsner to put his research and work at the University of Chicago on hold. In 1943, he joined the U.S. Army as a physician. During the war, he cared for U.S. soldiers, captured German officers, and survivors of the Nazi concentration camps. I have no doubt he provided the same exceptional care to all the patients he saw during the war.

Kirsner was a physician-scientist at the University of Chicago Medical Center for 77 years. Although he officially retired at the age of 95, former patients continued to call him for advice in all areas of health and medicine until his death at age 102.

Thank you for considering bestowing on Dr. Kirsner the oldest and highest civilian award in the United States.

Sincerely,

Mark Anderson, MD, PhD