



# *fellow*

## SPOTLIGHT:

**EDITH P. MITCHELL, MD**

*Fellow since 2016*

*By Jon Goff, Associate Director of Fellowship Relations*



**W**hen did you become a Fellow and what interested you about joining the College?

I joined in 2016 after several colleagues discussed the benefits of their membership.

**Tell us about your current appointment at Thomas Jefferson University and your path to that position.**

I joined the Sidney Kimmel Cancer Center at Jefferson to establish a Colorectal Program and immediately added a Gastrointestinal Program. Within a year, I was asked to direct the clinical part of the Breast Program. Working with community physicians, I was able to demonstrate the effectiveness of community engagement with clinicians, providers, patients, and advocates. I am currently Clinical Professor of Medicine and Medical Oncology, Director, Center to Eliminate Cancer Disparities, and Associate Director, Diversity Affairs for the Sidney Kimmel Cancer Center at Jefferson. Additionally, I served as the 116th President of the National Medical Association.

***Throughout your career, you have dedicated much of your time to improving cancer care in medically underserved areas through community service and outreach. Tell us about that work and how it became so important to you.***

I decided at age three that I would become a physician and develop better equity in healthcare. The need for this work became apparent as I heard family discuss why they could not admit my great-grandfather to the hospital because of segregation and poor care for Blacks.

***You were the first woman physician to become a Brigadier General in the United States Air Force. How has your military service affected your outlook as a physician?***

My military service in the United States Air Force afforded great contact with government officials who I had only seen on television. I received tremendous experience early on as a graduate of numerous educational programs, including Air War College, which is the major strategic planning institute for wartime readiness.

***Tell us about one of your favorite items in the College Library or the Mütter Museum.***

While I thoroughly enjoy traveling through the stacks of the College's Historical Medical Library, my favorite item is the recently acquired [skeleton of Carol Orzel](#) and the related display on fibrodysplasia ossificans progressiva.

***As a Trustee of the College, tell us about your vision for the future of this institution.***

There is such a great wealth of information available at the College. In the future, I envision digitization of additional materials to allow more individuals access to the collections. Moreover, although we are the first medical society in the United States, we are missing key aspects of the history of American medicine. For instance, we have no historical collection on medical care during segregation when Blacks and other minority physicians could not admit patients to hospitals and were denied admission to most academic institutions. Moving forward I would also very much like to see more active participation from our Fellows, both physicians and other members. ■



Carol Ann Orzel was born on April 20, 1959, and was diagnosed with Fibrodysplasia Ossificans Progressiva (FOP), one of the rarest diseases in the world, as a child. Carol passed away in February 2018 and now she is safely in her forever home. Carol's final wish was to donate her body to the Mütter Museum to educate the public about FOP. FOP is caused by a genetic mutation that transforms connective tissue, such as muscle, ligaments, and tendons, into bone. This results in progressive fusion of all the joints in the skeletal system. It occurs only in about 1 in 2 million births.

*Photo by Constance Mensh for The Mütter Museum*