



The Association of American Cancer Institutes In Memoriam: Dr. Harold P. Freeman

The Association of American Cancer Institutes (AACI) Board of Directors, staff, and cancer center members are saddened by the loss of surgical oncologist **Harold P. Freeman, MD**, who died August 11, 2026, at age 93.

Dr. Freeman was a familiar face to the AACI community, most recently joining a panel discussion on the future of patient navigation during the 2024 AACI/CCAF Annual Meeting in Chicago.

A pioneer in health equity research, Dr. Freeman introduced the concept of patient navigation while working at Harlem Hospital in 1990, where he routinely noted health disparities in the poor, predominantly Black communities the hospital served. In a 2022 interview published in *The Cancer Letter's* Cancer History Project, he described the patient navigation model as spanning a patient's entire health care journey, from screening and diagnosis through treatment and survivorship. This comprehensive approach has been adopted by cancer centers worldwide, with some components codified into the American College of Surgeons' accreditation standards for hospital cancer programs.

"Nearly four decades after Dr. Freeman originated patient navigation, his work is still timely and urgent," said AACI Executive Director **Jennifer W. Pegher**. "His legacy will continue through the ongoing efforts of the cancer center community to ensure that all people have equitable access to cancer screening, diagnosis, and care."