

Howard Sokolov, MD

1939-2014

This week marks the passing of Dr. Howard Sokolov, an outstanding psychiatrist, leader, scholar and person who made tremendous contributions to the Ohio's mental health system for decades. Dr. Sokolov served as Commissioner of the Department of Mental Health in the 1970s, and following this had a number of other important positions including Forensic Medical Director and Acting Medical Director for an extended period. He was instrumental in updating the forensic mental health processes in the Ohio Revised Code, and many other states have since turned to this work as a model for modernizing their own forensic systems. He also served as President of the Ohio Psychiatric Association and was Professor of Psychiatry and George T. Harding III Psychotherapy Chair at Ohio State, where he was named as "Professor of the Year" by the psychiatry residents on several occasions.

Dr. Sokolov completed his undergraduate degree at Columbia University and his medical degree at the State University of New York Downstate Medical Center, followed by residency training at the University of Cincinnati and certification in psychoanalysis at the Cincinnati Psychoanalytic Institute. He received numerous honors and awards, including Best Doctors in America, and the Ohio Forensic Award from the Ohio Department of Mental Health (ODMH).

I first met Dr. Sokolov in 1989 during a forensic psychiatry rotation in my final year of training at Ohio State. Later, I worked for Howard when he was Medical Director at the old Harding Hospital in Worthington and I was the director of addiction treatment services. During those years, I had the pleasure of meeting with Howard each week for supervision which I continue to value. These years and his mentorship were key to my professional and personal development, as he was not only knowledgeable, but also incredibly wise. We also frequently had lunch at the Harding cafeteria, usually commiserating about the vegetarian selections offered.

Howard continued to be a support and mentor to me until the present. He usually offered advice only if asked, and when the advice was shared it was sage. The one exception related to career development opportunities. Twice he suggested that I apply to become ODMH Medical Director. I listened to him the second time and here I am.

These experiences are not unique to me. Many around Ohio have had similar interactions with Howard and that have had lasting formative effects. Howard was a great man, and I am proud to have known him. He will be missed.

