

# Honouring Dr. James T. Rutka



TEMERTY FACULTY OF MEDICINE  
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

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“Whether in the operating room, at the lab bench or around the board table, Jim is a leader through and through – tirelessly working to bring people together to achieve ambitious common goals. As he steps down as the R.S. McLaughlin Professor and Chair, he can be assured that his impact will be felt on the Department of Surgery for generations to come.”

**Trevor Young, MD, PhD, FRCPC, FCAHS**  
Dean, Temerty Faculty of Medicine  
Vice Provost, Relations with Health Care Institutions  
University of Toronto

## Jim Rutka: Leadership in Action

A skilled and compassionate neurosurgeon, gifted researcher and extraordinary academic leader, Dr. James T. Rutka has made a lasting impact on health care in Canada and around the world.

For more than four decades, Jim Rutka has helped shape the field of neurosurgery as we know it today. His groundbreaking work and commitment to surgical innovation have helped transform treatments for paediatric brain tumours, and he is recognized the world over for his development of pioneering interventions for children living with epilepsy.

Today, Jim’s work in novel human brain tumour cell lines is used as a model by scientists around the globe — with his lab being one of the first to explore revolutionary techniques for the delivery of cancer drugs through the blood-brain barrier.

His distinguished body of work has also been marked by a passion for global health. Jim has been a tireless champion of addressing lingering inequities in neurosurgery delivery in countries such as Brazil and Ukraine, calling these efforts the ‘most gratifying and fulfilling’ experience of his career. They also led him to establish the Global Surgery Program within the University of Toronto’s Department of Surgery.

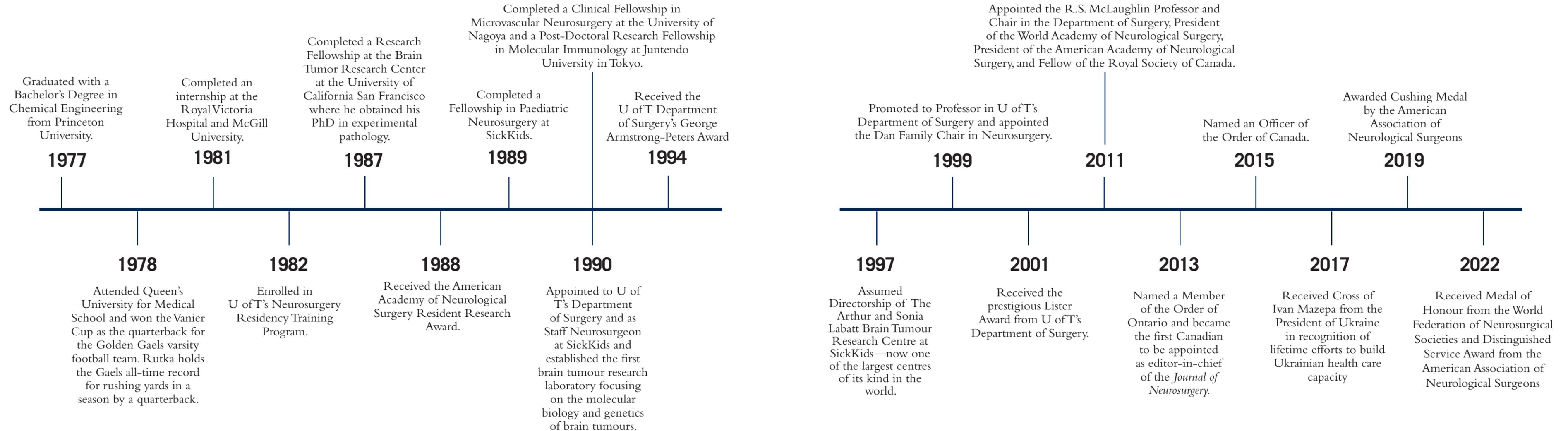
And it is here, at U of T, that Jim has perhaps had the greatest impact. A graduate of U of T’s Neurosurgery Training Program, Jim was first appointed as a faculty member in the Division of Neurosurgery in 1990. He would later go on to serve as the division’s Dan Family Chair from 1999 to 2011, and as the R.S. McLaughlin Professor and Chair of the Department of Surgery from 2011 to today.

Beloved by his many students and trainees, and recognized by his colleagues for his dedicated support for surgeon-scientists, unmatched strategic vision, and strong commitment to collaboration, Jim has played a central role in U of T’s 2022 ranking among the top three institutions in the world for surgery by US News and World Report — a powerful recognition of the department’s research, education and patient care expertise.

It is U of T’s great honour to pay tribute to Dr. James Rutka as his term as the R.S. McLaughlin Professor and Chair of the Department of Surgery comes to a close in 2022.

## Dr. James Rutka's Career: A Timeline of Achievement

For more than four decades, Jim Rutka has helped shape the field of neurosurgery as we know it today.



## The James T. Rutka Endowment for Research and Innovation in Surgery

As Jim Rutka's final term as R.S. McLaughlin Professor and Chair of the Department of Surgery comes to a close, our community joins together to honour him and his remarkable legacy.

Research is the lifeblood of modern medicine – fueling groundbreaking advances in medical therapies, techniques and technology.

Yet, competition for research funding from government and other sources has never been fiercer than it is today. Too often, talented researchers are left discouraged, seeing their high-potential work left underfunded. This is especially the case for researchers in the critical early stages of their careers, as well as for those investigating the highest-potential/highest-risk ventures.

Recognizing this, and guided by a desire to honour Jim Rutka's leadership, the Department of Surgery's Executive Committee has committed to establishing the **James T. Rutka Endowment for Research and Innovation in Surgery**.

The new James T. Rutka Endowment for Research and Innovation in Surgery will support promising research projects across the department and its network of hospital partners and research institutes— capturing Jim's impact across many subject areas, including neurosurgery, global health, innovation and physician wellness.

The Rutka fund will be endowed, supporting generations of surgical faculty members and trainees, while also providing a lasting tribute to Jim and his legacy of leadership.

While initial philanthropic commitments have already been received in support of the Rutka Endowment, more support will increase the fund's impact, and benefit more deserving surgical researchers and innovators.

**Together, we can pay tribute to a remarkable leader and support tomorrow's brightest minds as they seek out solutions to surgery's most pressing challenges.**

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“One need only spend a few minutes with Jim Rutka to be inspired by his passion for medicine. He takes true delight in supporting innovative research ideas as they transform into life-saving solutions, and in nurturing new generations of impactful surgeons and health care professionals, both in Canada and globally. He is a tremendous ambassador for U of T, for his field, and for medicine as a whole.”

**James and Louise Temerty and family**

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“Jim provided an exceptional environment as mentor and role model for me to develop as a surgeon-scientist. He was an ideal supervisor, providing the right balance of hands-on mentorship and creative freedom to allow me to step into the world of scientific and translational research discovery.”

**Dr. Peter Dirks, PGME, PhD '97**

Professor, Department of Surgery  
(Jim's first trainee and his first PhD student)

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“Jim's impact on the field of neurosurgery and on the brain health of our community cannot be overstated. Under his direction and care, the *Arthur and Sonia Labatt Brain Tumour Research Centre* at SickKids has emerged as one of the world's key research centres on the molecular biology of brain tumors and has advanced our understanding of the human brain. Our family is grateful to Jim for his impeccable leadership over the last twenty years and for bringing our vision for the Centre to life. We are thrilled that the University has initiated this special campaign to honour him.”

**Arthur S. Labatt and family**

For more information, please contact:

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