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Gentle Giants – Speedy Surgery

Jeanie Robinson-Pownall
University of Pennsylvania

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Dr. Tulleners

Dr. Eric Peter Tulleners, the Lawrence Baker Sheppard Professor of Surgery in the School of Veterinary Medicine, died of cancer on January 16 at the age of 47. He was an expert in upper respiratory tract dysfunction in horses and pioneered the use of laser surgery to treat them. He also studied laparoscopic surgery for horses and general surgery for cows.

Dr. Tulleners received his B.S. with honors in Animal Science from California Polytechnic State University at San Luis Obispo in 1974, and his veterinary degree with honors from University of California at Davis in 1978. He served as an intern at Western College of Veterinary Medicine in Canada, and as a resident at Penn's New Bolton Center.

He became a lecturer in the School of Veterinary Medicine in 1981, and was promoted to assistant professor of surgery in 1982, as well as becoming the Head of Food Animal Surgical Services. In 1986, Dr. Tulleners became the Head of the newly-founded Laser Surgical Services and in 1991 he was named Chief of the



Section of Surgery. He was named the Lawrence Baker Sheppard Associate professor of Surgery in 1993, and attained the rank of Professor in 1998. He was a Fellow of the American Society for Laser

Medicine and Surgery, and last year was elected to a three-year term on the Board of Regents of the American College of Veterinary Surgeons.

Dr. Tulleners is survived by his wife Susan Y. Ashburn Tulleners; their two children, Pamela Diane and Steven Eric Tulleners; two brothers, Frank Leonard Tulleners and Robin Mark Tulleners; and three sisters, Joyce Patricia Simpson, Michelle Laureen Tulleners, and Paulette Arny Howell.

Donations may be made either to the Pamela and Steven Tulleners Trust Fund, c/o Commonwealth Bank, New Garden Shopping Center, Kennett Square, PA 19348; or to the Dr. Eric Peter Tulleners Scholarship Fund, c/o Trustees of the University

of Pennsylvania, New Bolton Center, 382 West Street Road, Kennett Square, PA 19346-1692. 🐾

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Gentle Giants — Speedy Surgery

Clydesdales, Belgians, Percherons, and Shires — weighing anywhere from 1,600 to 2,525 pounds — arrive at New Bolton Center from as far away as Iowa, Florida, Wisconsin, and Canada for laser surgery on their airways. Techniques developed by the late Dr. Eric Tulleners allow surgeons here to perform this surgery safely.

The surgery is needed to repair a paralysis on the left side of the larynx, a common problem of draft horses. While not life-threatening, affected horses make a whistling or roaring sound and cannot tolerate exercise. “We remove the paralyzed left vocal cord by laser surgery and pull open (“tie back”) the cartilage flap, both of which have collapsed into the windpipe causing an obstruction that can deprive the horse of greater than 50% of normal airflow. Without the surgery the horse can function well standing or walking, but can not tolerate any strenuous exercise,” explains Dr. Eric Parente, part of the laser surgery team at New

Bolton Center which also includes Drs. James Orsini and Michael Ross.

The horses' weight is a challenge for anesthesia because they can develop nerve and muscle damage from being in one position for too long without enough padding. Since their body weight can literally “crush” their nerves, the operating table is especially heavily padded. A whole surgical team, each knowing his or her part, carefully and quickly coordinates their tasks and anesthesia time is kept to a minimum.

New Bolton Center's operating room at the Kline Center is equipped to handle these huge patients. The overhead monorail used to move patients from the induction (anesthesia) stall to the operating table is strong enough to carry the load, and the operating table is big enough to handle these equine giants. The high-quality personnel and these technological advancements make New Bolton Center the leader in respiratory surgery in the draft horse. 🐾 J.R.

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