



## Dr. Gary Hammen

February 15, 1981 - September 17, 2021

Dr. Gary Hammen, MD, PhD died unexpectedly on September 17 2021. Gary was an amazing father, husband, son, brother, doctor, scientist, and friend. Gary had many roles and in all of them brought his whole heart, which was huge. His love and now loss are felt intensely.

Gary was born and raised in Fonda IA, to Jerry and Kate Hammen (now Anthofer), where he helped on the family farm from a young age. He excelled in both school and rebellion. He loved exploring and science experiments from a young age – from experimenting with baking to building to flammable objects. He loved math, dragons, his siblings, and his friends. While Gary dealt with many difficulties during his childhood, he emerged with an intense work ethic and an understanding of the complexities of love and sorrow.

After graduating high school, he joined the army and became a young father. He joined the Army to “gain discipline and blow stuff up”, and his service fed his interest in people and the world, jump starting his eventual travels that included 5 of the 7 continents. After leaving the army due to a service related disability, he returned to work, college, and family life with Ashlyn and his first wife, Bridgett – eventually graduating from the University of Iowa as a member of Phi Beta Kappa academic honor society, with an honors degree in Biochemistry.

Gary matriculated to Washington University as part of the Medical Scientist Training Program, earning his PhD in Neuroscience and his medical degree. There he met his wife, Alecia, and was one of the few students to raise a child throughout the duration of his training – taking his daughter Ashlyn with him to study groups and to look at slides in the lab. Gary’s research included the design and use of optical coupled planar imaging to study the secondary olfactory cortex, which resulted in several publications as well as methods advancement. He developed a close group of friends and colleagues, sharing not only science but much fun and laughter. After defending his PhD, he returned to medical school where he enjoyed clinical care, particularly the care of patients who otherwise were dismissed by the medical system.

During this time Gary married his wife Alecia in 2011, with whom he had two more children, Emmett (now 5) and Vincent (now 4). Gary, whom Alecia would describe as “her person”, was a generally fun, fiery, caring and adventurous partner. From scuba diving in Australia, to hiking throughout the western US, running half marathons, exploring the California, Missouri, and Italian wine countries, they had many adventures and “so much love” as Gary would emphasize. He and Ashlyn strengthened their bond with a shared love of Dr. Who, Lord of the Rings, video games and learning about medical ailments. He taught Emmett to snorkel in Lake Michigan, hunted worms and bugs with Vincent, taught them to start a campfire, find constellations, and roar like a dragon. Even through the difficult times that come with the stress of medical training, raising young children and many life changes, Gary continued to work with dedication to be a father and partner. He loved his family with all of his heart.

Unfortunately, after entering the residency training program in anesthesia, Gary’s intense care for patients labelled as difficult by the medical system, his desire to really get to know and care for the whole person, his scientific mind always pushing to understand the “how” of diagnoses and treatments was deemed to be not a good fit for his training program. These differences in priorities, along with the program’s unwillingness to support his status as a disabled veteran with a sleep disorder and the ongoing stress of medical problems in his children resulted in him parting ways with the extended training program and moving into general practice and addiction medicine.

In Gary’s practice of general and addiction medicine he found his professional calling. He eventually started his own private practice, Kirkwood Medication Assisted Treatments, and was said by many patients to be the best physician they had ever seen. He was dedicated to his patients, taking calls at all hours of the day and night, spending as much time as with them as needed, and guiding them through difficult times. He had an unending desire to help all of those he met, even sometimes at his own expense.

Through all of the ups and downs of life, Gary loved fiercely, cared deeply, and remained intensely curious. His sister Kayla summarized as “He was my real life hero... [he] made me feel like I was someone ... someone special”. Gary brought that gift to so many people. He will be forever treasured by not only his wife and children but his mother Kate (Danny) Anthofer – from whom he gained his perseverance, caring, and consistency, his father Jerry Hammen – from whom he inherited his fun, spontaneity, and adventurousness, his sister Sheena (David), her children Tyler and Keagan, his brother Shane (Amy) and their children Madison, Mackenzie, Aiden and Isaac, his sister Kayla (Tyler) and their son Brooks, and his youngest sister Brooke (Coty), as well as his

grandfather, grandmother, 13 aunts and uncles, 29 cousins, many in-laws to whom he was a beloved member of the family, and countless friends, patients, and colleagues. He is eternally loved and he will be so missed.

At this time arrangements will be kept to the immediate family, though a full memorial service will be held at a future time.

In lieu of flowers please consider a donation to [shatterproof.org](http://shatterproof.org) or [operationsecondchance.org](http://operationsecondchance.org).

# Comments

---



“ Gary, you are truly a lifesaver in every sense of the word. I have been honored to be able to call you a colleague, but more importantly, an amazing friend who would do anyone for anybody at any time. The world has lost one of the greatest physicians and men I have met.

**Kyle** - October 06 at 07:22 PM

---



“ I have never met such a kind man. I had reached a point with my loved one I was ready to give up. The State couldn't help because you have to wait for a bed. The hospital said it was addiction he needs rehab. The police said no warrant yet we have to release him. Everyone was turning their back while he was dying. On a Sunday Dr. Hammen met me and my husband at his office and actually helped. Ty

**Buffy Appleby** - October 06 at 01:20 AM

---



“ I called Dr. Hammen 2 1/2 years ago desperate after 11 attempts at rehab in 18 months and 4 ambulance rides to the emergency department. He answered the phone and instead of telling me it would be a couple weeks or a month, he said let's get you in here tomorrow, I don't want you to wait. When I met him I was astonished. He was so unlike every doctor I've ever been to even the few really good ones. His mind was always moving. I looked on his bookshelf and saw several books that I had read or studied from and when I mentioned them it started the most interesting and rewarding relationship I've ever had with any health care professional and I would not hesitate to call him a friend. I will miss talking about the countries we were fortunate enough to visit, the lunacy of politics and the day to day pieces of building a new and sober life. Most of all, I will miss the dedication he had for us as patients. There are far too few doctors that care more about the patient than the bill, even fewer that make their patients a top priority but there was only one like Dr. Hammen. My deepest condolences to his family, friends and co-workers. You are missed and remembered Doc.

**Christian Connor** - October 05 at 05:37 PM

---



“ Dr hammen was more then just my dr he was a friend and a person no matter your past believed you could have a future I'm clean because of him I tired many things rehab concouling one on one mat clinics but nothing ever worked my wife found dr hammen for me and from day one I never felt judged..my schedule on the river is crazy but he always found time when I was home to fit me in there will never be another dr Like him in the drug rehabilitation programs. I was very saddened and its a huge loss to hear of his passing I'm sure his patients just like myself feel very lost and I'd like to give my condolences to his family as well...thank you dr hammen for everything I would not be where I am if it wasn't for you.

**Michael** - September 30 at 03:58 PM

---



“ I've been a patient of Dr. Hammen's for about a year and a half. I don't have the vocabulary to describe what he meant to me. I loved him dearly and I still cry everyday. I hope he was able to give me the strength and courage to go on with my life without his help. He saved my life more than once!! He never gave up on me, I think he tried harder to help me than I try to help myself. For that I feel ashamed. Hopefully his passing will inspire me to try harder and do better as a human being. I'll never forget him!!

**Scott Davis** - September 29 at 06:49 PM

---



“ I am so sorry for the loss of Dr. Gary Hammen. My sincerest condolences to his family; you have been in my thoughts. Dr. Hammen quite literally saved my life two years ago and my mother’s life prior. He was our rock, not only our doctor but a friend and confidant. I am not yet ready to believe that he won’t be there to cheer me up, tell me how proud he is, to smile back at me with that smile that made you feel as if everything was going to be ok. And that is something Gary was phenomenal at. No matter how difficult the situation, how uncertain, I knew that Dr. Hammen would be there to help in any way he possibly could. Dr. Hammen gave every bit within him to his patients, and I am so beyond grateful and lucky to call myself a patient of his. He truly cared about helping and advocating for others. I would spend hours sometimes in the office, bugging him with my random questions, getting into conversations ranging from serious medical talk-to Aristotle-to Star Trek. His laughter was so contagious. His care for others, his commitment to his patients and his family and loved ones, was so genuine. The work he did has forever changed lives for the better, and I hope to be a testament of that. The world lost a truly beautiful soul, and I didn’t think our last conversation would be our last a few weeks ago, but he smiled at me with his bright smile and told me how proud of me he was, and to go on and tackle law school; he believed in me. That is what I’m going to continue to do, Dr. Hammen. I am going to keep on making him proud. The best way to honor his legacy is by continuing to be the strong woman he helped me to become. I am forever grateful to have known and met and been a patient of Dr. Gary Hammen. He gave my family our life back, and the world has lost a truly beautiful, brilliant bright light. Peace be with your family, with him, and to all those who knew and loved him so.

**Anna Goodson** - September 29 at 08:01 AM

---



“ I am so sad to hear about this. My deepest condolences to his entire family especially Alecia and the kids. Gary was a sweetheart and I’ll cherish my memories of him from grad school.

**Ben Kolber** - September 28 at 11:03 PM

---



“ Dr hammen was the best, most caring and down to earth doctor I've ever had. He absolutely changed my life and I wouldn't be the women/mother/wife I am today without him. When I was speaking to him, it didn't feel like just my Dr, it felt like a friend. He truly cared about his patients and you can't find that kind of care every where. Hearing the words " I am so proud of you, you've made it so far" from Dr. Hammen would make my day and im very sad I will not be able to hear those words or his funny jokes anymore. My thoughts are with all his family and his patients. He was a very loved person and he will never be forgotten.

**Angel** - September 27 at 09:53 PM

---



“ Hi Angel, my name is Scott. I'm glad to have found another patient of Dr. Hammen's. I feel we are the only ones that can understand what we are going through. Grieving his loss has been difficult at best for me. I cry everyday. I thought your words were kind and spot on. Just wanted to share that with you.

**Scott** - September 29 at 06:41 PM

---



“ Dr. Hammen was a very unique and genuine care provider and I find myself lucky to have been his patient. He never gave up on me, no matter how stubborn I was, and I will truly miss him and his kindness, wisdom, and care. My condolences to the family, I can't imagine the pain you're going through. Thanks for everything Doc, I'll miss you

**Luke Thomas** - September 27 at 07:34 PM

---



“ While I only knew Dr. Gary Hammen through a limited lens, he was so unique as a physician and individual it is difficult to find the right words to accurately describe him.

I can say this, the approximately two years I was fortunate enough to know him have impacted me for the infinitely positive. I learned so much during our conversations - about myself and much more. I am a healthier and happier person because of him. I am a better person because of him. These traits, directly attributable to my time with Dr. Gary Hammen, will last for the rest of my life.

My most sincere thoughts are with Dr. Gary Hammen's family and friends. His legacy of helping others is rare and remarkable.

**Daniel A. Permuter** - September 27 at 06:35 PM

---



“ We are so saddened by the loss of Gary, a perfect example of how to live generously and authentically, leaving no person behind. We wish the best to Alecia and their kids. Gary's virtues will live on through them. Alecia, you and your family are in our thoughts and prayers. I'll never forget our New Years Eve celebration together (2014?) and seeing Gary's excitement when around his kids. We love you all!

**Nick and Kateri Trapp** - September 26 at 02:22 PM

---



“ Dr. Hammen was the best mentor and boss someone could ask for. He was a nerdy genius, who held immense care for everyone he came into contact with. People like him are extremely rare, and it was an honor to know him. I'm still in disbelief that he's gone, but the ways he impacted people's lives will never leave. He will always be remembered by the endless number of people that he is loved by and cared for. His family, friends, and patients are in my thoughts.

**Hailee Domash** - September 25 at 05:48 PM



“ Well said Hailee.

**Tiffany L** - September 27 at 01:46 PM

---



“ Alecia and family, I am so sorry for your loss. Gary was a wonderful man. He was so committed to doing good in the world, so committed to his family, and so incredibly smart and good hearted. The world is a lesser place without him. I send my condolences.  
-Jim Fehr

**Jim Fehr** - September 24 at 05:08 PM

---



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Dr. Gary Hammen.



September 23 at 01:53 PM

---



“ Sentiments of Serenity Spray was purchased for the family of Dr. Gary Hammen.



September 22 at 02:53 PM

---



“ I had the good fortune of knowing Gary for years while we did our PhDs. Many of us trainees knew Gary for his sharp mind, his love for his daughter, his passion for science, and for his killer barbeques and holiday parties. Here are two personal memories of mine. One year, late at night on a camping trip, Gary reached into his bag and pulled out a pair of lasers that he had “borrowed” from lab and rigged with battery packs. The lightsaber duels that followed were epic and must have been visible from outer space. Another time, chatting as we walked back to our hotel after an academic conference dinner, Gary abruptly disappeared midsentence into a restaurant. Puzzled, I waited for him. He emerged with a bag of food, which he promptly gave away - he had spotted someone in need. Gary was a good person, he is missed, and my condolences go to his family and friends.

**Jonathan Power** - September 22 at 12:54 PM

---



“ I'm honored to have served on Gary's thesis committee and thus to have played a small part in his scientific journey, touched on with others' tributes here. What a thoughtful and special person. My deepest condolences to Gary's family.

**Steve Mennerick** - September 22 at 10:33 AM

---



“ I met Dr. Hammen in February of this year. I came to his office feeling defeated as I had no luck in finding a treatment to help me have relief from severe depression and suicidal thoughts. We tried doing ketamine treatments and it worked! For the first time in a long time I felt relieved and like I could breathe.  
Dr. Hammen helped give me back a chance for a happy healthier life! It was funny because every time the ketamine would kick in I thought he took my teeth or I would tell him what episode of bob's burgers we were in that day.  
I am forever grateful for Dr. Hammen. I am glad our paths crossed!

**Tiffany** - September 22 at 12:33 AM



“ Pam Johnston Birmingham AL purchased the Healing & Hope Sympathy Basket for the family of Dr. Gary Hammen.



Pam Johnston Birmingham AL - September 21 at 11:16 PM

---



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Dr. Gary Hammen.



September 21 at 10:58 PM

---



“ I am so heart-sick to hear this news. To all of Gary's loved ones: Gary was a loved by many people you may not have met. He was a great friend and colleague, and I am lucky to have spent several years with him on his journey as a young scientist.

Gary's life experience gave him the drive and courage to talk about the difficult things. This was true in the lab, and also in life. When he and I were working together with Tim Holy on a difficult research project, Gary's gifts helped us to find insights into aspects of biology that were incredibly murky at the outset. When the time for work was over, and we shifted to discussions of life, his gift opened up avenues for us share concerns about structural problems in our society. Most importantly, he wanted to share the human stories behind the difficult topics many tried to distill into a sound bite (often in order to dismiss the issue). In other words, he wanted to focus on the human stories behind the "headlines." Sometimes, these discussions kept us up too late at night!

Gary's inquisitiveness was one of his shining gifts, and reflected on his deep insights into the human condition. Gary named and confronted difficult things. He worked at pushing through the problems that many chose to ignore. This was a most honorable endeavor, and to me reflected the deep sense of duty Gary had to serve all of us.

I am very proud to have been a part of his life, even if it was a small part.

My deepest condolences to all of Gary's loved ones. God bless you all.

**Julian Meeks** - September 21 at 10:36 PM

---



“ Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Dr. Gary Hammen.



September 21 at 09:21 PM

---



“ This is devastating news. Gary was a truly wonderful person to know throughout our time together at Wash U. My deepest condolences to Alecia and all the rest of the family.

**Seth Bloom** - September 21 at 06:23 PM

---



“ Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Dr. Gary Hammen.



September 21 at 05:49 PM

---



“ Lovely One Spathiphyllum Plant was purchased for the family of Dr. Gary Hammen.



September 21 at 05:25 PM

---



“ I will always remember Gary as a person with a heart so big it could not be contained in one person, and a brilliant, ever-curious scientist with an encyclopedic knowledge of so many things. I feel lucky to have known him, and pained that his time was cut so short. My thoughts go out to his family: may you find peace in memory of his sparkling life.

**Tim Holy** - September 21 at 03:25 PM

---



“ Gary, you will be forever remembered and missed as kind soul and wonderful doctor!

I always enjoyed discussing with you about cases we covered together in the operating room. We often talked about family and work and how complex sometimes was to find a balance. I remember how much you cared about your family, and how much you wanted to pursue your medical career.  
May your soul rest in peace!

My most sincere condolences to the Family!

Helga Komen, MD, Assist Prof. of Anesthesiology  
Washington University in St Louis



Helga Komen - September 21 at 02:25 PM

---



“ Our thoughts and prayers are with you all. Sending you our love



Craig and Mary Farrell - September 21 at 11:45 AM

---



“ Sweet Tranquility Basket was purchased for the family of Dr. Gary Hammen.



September 21 at 08:46 AM