

Dr. Bill Kohl: an icon gained by science and a great friend who left us!



Dr. Bill Kohl: um ícone que a ciência ganhou, um grande amigo que nos deixou!

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On January 8, 2024, we received with great sadness the news of the passing of a friend, colleague, professor, and researcher: Dr. Harold William Kohl III. Bill Kohl, as he was known and liked to be called, was born on April 11, 1960 in the city of St. Louis, Missouri, United States, and spent part of his childhood in the state of Arizona. He was a professor of Epidemiology and Kinesiology at the University of Texas Science Health Center in Houston, School of Public Health in Austin, and Department of Kinesiology and Health Education in Austin, Texas, USA.

Among his fields of action and positions, we list some that deserve to be highlighted:

- a) Member of the Institute for Aerobics Research (Cooper Institute), participating in the Aerobics Center Longitudinal Study and FITNESSGRAM.
- b) Member of the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) and the National Academy of Kinesiology.
- c) Director of the Department of Physical Activity and Health at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC/USA).
- d) Member of the scientific committee of the President's Council on Physical Fitness, Sports and Nutrition.
- e) Founding member and first president of the International Society for Physical Activity and Health (ISPAH).
- f) Member of the U.S. National Physical Activity Plan Alliance.
- g) Founder and director of the University of Texas Physical Activity Epidemiology Program.
- h) Emeritus editor of the Journal of Physical Activity and Public Health (JPAH).
- i) Member of the Physical Activity Network of the Americas (RAFA – PANA).
- j) Founding member of the Latin American Society of Physical Activity and Health.
- k) Developed “Active Texas 2030”, a plan placing physical activity as a public health priority.
- l) Member of the Steering Committee for the Lancet Physical Activity Series in 2012, 2016, 2021, and 2024.

He left an extraordinary legacy for advancing research into physical activity and health globally, having published more than 300 articles in scientific journals. Below we list some of his most prominent works:



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- Led the “2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans”¹, one of the most important documents produced by the area, perhaps the most complete published to date.
- In 2012, he participated in the Lancet thematic series on physical activity, leading the article entitled “The pandemic of physical inactivity: global action for public health”² – This series brought together leading names in the area of physical activity and health, compiling the main scientific evidence to date.
- He wrote, together with his colleague and friend Tinker Murray, the book “Foundations of Physical Activity and Public Health”³, published in 2012. This was the first book to make the interconnection between these two areas. It was published in its second edition in 2020⁴ by the publisher Human Kinetics – a recommended reading for everyone!
- Participated in the “Global Observatory for Physical Activity (GoPA)” team (<https://new.globalphysicalactivityobservatory.com/>), with the production of the first Almanac in 2016 and the second in 2021.

Bill Kohl was a link between the pioneers in the area of physical activity and health in the world, as well as with the new researchers who are current international references in their respective countries. He worked with renowned people such as: Ralph Paffenbarger, Steven Blair, Kenneth Cooper, Carl Caspersen, Caroline Macera, Barbara Ainsworth, Russel Pate, Loretta DiPietro, James Sallis, I-Min Lee, Michael Pratt, Pedro C. Hallal, Cora Craig, Adrian Bauman, William Haskell, Fiona Bull, Gregory Heath, Deborah Salvo, Andrea Ramirez-Varela, Melody Ding, among many others.

Bill Kohl was a friend of the famous and admired Dr. Jeremy Morris, the pioneer of research into the health benefits of physical activity in the 1950s. He kept a photo of the two of them together in his office. Jerry Morris passed away on October 28, 2009. I (SCD) remember the sadness on his face at the loss of his friend. It's this same feeling we share now. We lost not only a great researcher and professor, but also a great colleague and friend.

The authors of this editorial feel very privileged for the opportunity we were given 2009, through our professors, colleagues and friends Dr. Markus V. Nahas, Dr. Pedro C. Hallal and Dr. Rodrigo S. Reis, to carry out part of our doctorate at the School of Public Health in Austin, Texas, USA, under the supervision

of prof. Dr. Bill Kohl. Bill, despite not knowing us, personally came to the airport in Austin to welcome us, shared his own work room with us, allowed us to listen in on his calls with different authorities, and did not keep any secrets from us. He entrusted us with the co-supervision of his students and allowed us to attend his excellent classes for graduate students.

Bill allowed us to work and learn from him to lead groups of researchers. He shared his knowledge with us. He dedicated his precious time to us! He picked me up (FVS) from my home in Austin for months, both to go to work and to have barbecues at his house. He believed in our potential. He encouraged us to fight for what we believe in. He welcomed us into his own home, as if we were old friends, who could open the refrigerator and help ourselves. He used to arrive at work early, often being the first to arrive at the university. He liked to stop work at 4:00 pm so we could go for a walk around Austin, on the banks of the Colorado River, where he would tell us stories and create new plans and work on physical activity; or to ride his bike, which was located in his workplace, and get his body moving after an exhausting day of work sitting in the office.

Finally, we could mention countless other qualities and achievements that Bill had. His scientific achievements can be seen in his curriculum vitae (<https://sph.uth.edu/research/centers/dell/about-us/Kohl%20CV%20June%202022.pdf>). However, his curriculum is not able to convey the fantastic person he was. Only those who knew him know that he dedicated his life to successfully fulfilling what he was committed to. Only those who saw him speaking saw the glow on his face because he liked what he did. Only those who lived with him realized the simple and dear person that was inside him! Only those who were with him know how he respected everyone around him.

In this editorial, we express our sincere feelings. When the news arrived, we were making plans to return to Austin and see him, if only to, once again, thank him for all the support he gave us. We will no longer receive messages of affection and consideration via WhatsApp. Bill is gone, but his legacy lives on. We have a great team of researchers who worked closely with him and will be able to continue what Bill did with great skill: training people to be leaders in their areas. Research in Physical Activity and Health in Brazil was privileged to have someone like Bill Kohl concerned and tirelessly involved in its development! He liked Brazil and we liked him. We are all grateful to him and pay homage

in this humble and sincere tribute...

Conflict of interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Author's contributions

Dumith SC and Siqueira FCV jointly wrote the text and approved the final version.

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