



Dear COT Family,

It is with great sadness that we inform you that James K. Styner, MD, FACS, developer and pioneer of the Advanced Trauma Life Support (ATLS®) course, passed away on January 22, 2024, at his home in Manila, Philippines, at the age of 89 years. Dr. Styner was born on July 22, 1934, in Los Angeles, California and attended the University of California–Irvine Medical School. He trained in orthopedic surgery, ultimately developing a practice in Lawndale, California. It was on February 17, 1976, during the time when Dr. Styner and his family resided in Lincoln, Nebraska, that the tragedy which led directly to the development of the ATLS® course occurred. Dr. Styner, his wife Charlene, and their four children were returning home to Lincoln from a family wedding in Los Angeles in a plane piloted by Dr. Styner that crashed in a field in rural Nebraska. Dr. Styner recounted the crash, and the subsequent events that followed, in the video linked [here](#). Following the crash, Dr. Styner discussed with Dr. Ronald Craig, a family physician and friend, his concerns about the lack of initial, organized trauma care that he and his children received, to which Dr. Craig famously replied, “you have to train them before you can blame them.” With that, the ATLS® course was born.

After initial development, the course was subsequently brought into the American College of Surgeons (ACS) as an educational program in 1980, being quickly promulgated throughout North America utilizing the regional structure of the Committee on Trauma (COT). ATLS® has now been expanded worldwide, having been translated into 10 different languages and currently being taught to more than 50,000 learners each year in more than 88 different countries (and growing). The course is currently in its 10th edition with an 11th edition update expected in 2025.



James K. Styner, MD, FACS

Dr. Styner became a Fellow of the American College of Surgeons in 1982, serving on the Committee on Trauma from 1985 to 1989. On March 22, 2013, the ACS COT formally changed the name of its annual “Award for Meritorious

Service in ATLS” to the “James K. Styner Award for Meritorious Service” in honor of Dr. Styner’s pioneering vision and development of ATLS®.

The COT extends its condolences to Dr. Styner’s wife, Lily, and his immediate family, as well as the extended ATLS® Friends and Family across the world who mourn his loss.



American College of Surgeons

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