MOMENTS WITH MADSEN

Remembering Simon Margolis:
We Honor a Pioneer Who Helped Shape CRT

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There are moments when an organization pauses, not to celebrate an accomplishment or announce a new initiative, but simply to remember. To reflect. To honor the individuals whose vision, dedication and character helped build the foundation upon which we all stand.

Such was the purpose of the recent virtual "Tribute to Simon Margolis." What unfolded over the next 90 minutes was far more than a memorial. It became a reunion of friends, colleagues, mentors and industry pioneers whose shared memories painted a vivid portrait of a man whose influence continues to resonate throughout the Complex Rehab Technology profession.

Long before the formal program began, the spirit of the gathering was already evident. Familiar voices greeted one another with warmth, stories were exchanged and laughter punctuated conversations among individuals who had spent decades working side by side. While separated by geography, participants were united by a common purpose and by the profound impact Margolis had on each of their professional journeys.

The gathering served as a reminder that the CRT community has always been more than an industry. It is a profession built upon relationships, mentorship and an unwavering commitment to improving the lives of individuals who rely on CRT every day.

A Legacy Built on Service

Opening the program, Gerry Dickerson, Simon Margolis Fellow and past president of iNRRTS, the International Registry of Rehabilitation Technology Suppliers, welcomed attendees with heartfelt reflections on Margolis's remarkable contributions. Rather than simply recounting accomplishments, Dickerson spoke of Margolis's character, his integrity, curiosity, generosity and unwavering belief that every person deserved access to appropriate technology and knowledgeable professionals.

Those qualities became recurring themes throughout the event.

Margolis was remembered not simply as an innovator or leader but as someone who challenged others to think differently. He encouraged collaboration over competition, education over complacency and service above personal recognition. His influence extended well beyond organizational leadership, reaching countless suppliers, clinicians, manufacturers, educators and advocates inspired by his example.

For many participants, Margolis represented the very best of what this profession could become.

A Personal Reflection

One of the most moving moments of the tribute came as Margolis's wife, Marcia Margolis, shared personal reflections on her spouse, not as the respected industry leader many had known, but as the husband, father, friend and lifelong learner she knew best.

Her stories offered a glimpse beyond his professional accomplishments, revealing the curiosity, compassion, humor and determination that defined his everyday life. She described a man who approached every challenge with thoughtful intention, who believed deeply in helping others succeed and who remained committed to learning throughout his life.

As she spoke, it became increasingly clear that Margolis's professional legacy could never be separated from the person he was. His influence did not come from titles or recognition alone. It came from the authenticity with which he treated others and the respect he demonstrated in every interaction.

For those who knew him personally, these memories rekindled treasured moments. For younger professionals who knew Margolis only through stories, they provided a meaningful introduction to one of the profession's foundational leaders.

Hearing Margolis Once Again

Perhaps the most powerful portion of the tribute came with the presentation of Margolis's 2015 International Seating Symposium keynote address.

Although recorded more than a decade ago, his words carried remarkable relevance.

Listening today, one is struck not by how much has changed, but by how many of the profession's greatest opportunities and challenges remain remarkably familiar.

Throughout his keynote, Margolis spoke not about products, reimbursement or technology alone. Instead, he spoke about people.

He emphasized that every advancement in CRT begins with understanding the needs of the individual. Technology has extraordinary potential,

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Snapshot of some of the attendees from this special meeting.

"Visit: https://nrrts.org/simon-margolis/ to view the meeting recording and shared memories and reflections from Simon Margolis's friends and colleagues."

but only when paired with knowledgeable professionals committed to ethical practice, lifelong learning and collaboration across disciplines.

His message challenged attendees to resist becoming comfortable with the status quo. Innovation, he suggested, requires curiosity. Progress requires partnership. Excellence requires continuous education.

These themes continue to define the work of organizations such as iNRRTS today.

Margolis also reflected on the responsibility of professionals to strengthen the field for those who would follow. Rather than viewing knowledge as something to protect, he encouraged sharing expertise, mentoring newcomers and building systems that would ensure the profession continued to evolve long after any individual career had ended.

It is advice that feels just as timely today as it did in 2015.

Lessons That Continue to Guide Us

As the keynote concluded, participants were reminded that Margolis's greatest contributions were not confined to a single speech or initiative.

His legacy lives in every professional who chooses collaboration over division.

It lives in every supplier who pursues continuing education not because it is required, but because excellence demands it.

It lives in every clinician who advocates for appropriate technology despite administrative obstacles.

It lives in every mentor who invests time in helping someone new discover the purpose and responsibility that accompany a career in CRT.

Perhaps most importantly, Margolis's legacy reminds us that leadership is measured less by the positions we hold than by the people we inspire.

Looking Ahead

As participants reflected on Margolis's words, the conversation naturally shifted.

How do we preserve the history of our profession?

How do we prepare the next generation of CRT professionals?

How do we continue advocating for those whose independence depends upon access to appropriate technology?

Those questions became the foundation for the second half of the tribute, a thoughtful discussion among many of the profession's most respected leaders about the future of CRT and the responsibility each of us shares in carrying Margolis's vision forward.

This conversation serves as a powerful reminder that honoring a legacy is not simply about remembering the past.

It is about choosing, every day, to continue the work.

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Andrea Madsen is the executive director of iNRRTS, the International Registry of Rehabilitation Technology Suppliers. She has over 20 years' experience providing Complex Rehabilitation Technology to adult and pediatric patients in southern Minnesota, western Wisconsin, northern Iowa and internationally through her work with the Mayo Clinic. She earned a Bachelor of Science in business management and finance, is a credentialed Assistive Technology Professional and has been a Certified Complex Rehabilitation Technology Supplier®. She served for 10 years on the iNRRTS Board of Directors and as committee chair for the Midwest Association of Medical Equipment Services. She has lectured for the University of Minnesota Rochester, University of Wisconsin La Crosse, Mayo Clinic College of Medicine and Science and at the International Seating Symposium and Medtrade.