

# Dr. Ursano Program



## *A Festschrift Honoring*

Robert J. Ursano, MD, Col, USAF (Retired)

Founding Director, Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress

Professor, Departments of Psychiatry and Neuroscience

Uniformed Services University

May 29, 2026

0930 - 1530

Bethesda Auditorium, HJF



Friday, May 29, 2026  
HJF, Bethesda, MD

**SCHEDULE OF EVENTS**

**0930-1000:** Opening Remarks  
Stephen J. Cozza, MD  
Director, Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress, USU

COL Vincent F. Capaldi, II, ScM, MD, MC, USA  
Chair, Department of Psychiatry, USU

Eric Elster, MD  
Dean, School of Medicine, USUHS

**Introduction of Speakers: David M. Benedek, MD**

**1000-1025:** *“Bob Ursano: Physician, scientist, humanist—A personal reflection”*  
Eric B. Schoomaker, MD, PhD

**1025-1050:** *“Bob in genome-land: ‘Nice machine you have there...I am here to help’”*  
Harvey B. Pollard, MD, PhD

**1050-1115:** *“Robert J. Ursano’s vision and many contributions to the birth and development of the National PTSD Brain Bank”*  
Matthew J. Friedman, MD, PhD

**1115-1200:** Lunch

**Introduction of Speakers: James A. Naifeh, PhD**

**1200-1225:** *“Robert J. Ursano and STARRS: Personal reflections on the Study to Assess Risk and Resilience in Servicemembers”*  
Ronald C. Kessler, PhD

**1225-1250:** *“Robert Ursano – pioneer researcher of the Reizschutz –from silent trauma, ABC exposures, to invasive trauma – body recovery”*  
Lars Weisæth, MD, PhD

**1250-1315:**            *“The Global Impact of Robert J. Ursano on Crisis Leadership Behaviors to Protect Personnel and the Public During Chaos, Stress, and Uncertainty”*  
Joshua C. Morganstein, MD

**1315-1325:**            Break

**Introduction of Speakers: Quinn M. Biggs, PhD, MPH**

**1325-1350:**            *“Dr. Robert J. Ursano’s Global Legacy: International Collaboration Through the Lens of Japan”*  
Jun Shigemura, MD, PhD

**1350-1415:**            *“The Whole is Greater Than the Sum of Its Parts”*  
Carol S. Fullerton, PhD

**1415-1445:**            Award Presentation

Flag Folding Ceremony  
James C. West, MD

Closing Comments  
Robert J. Ursano, MD

**1445-1530:**            Reception

## Distinguished Symposium Speakers

**Matthew J. Friedman, MD, PhD**

Professor Emeritus, Department of Psychiatry and Pharmacology & Toxicology  
Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth  
Hanover, NH

**Carol S. Fullerton, PhD**

Scientific Director, Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress  
Research Professor, Department of Psychiatry  
Uniformed Services University  
Bethesda, MD

**Ronald C. Kessler, PhD**

McNeil Family Professor, Department of Health Care Policy  
Harvard Medical School  
Boston, MA

**Joshua C. Morganstein, MD, DFAPA**

Captain, U.S. Public Health Service (Retired)  
Professor, Departments of Psychiatry and Military & Emergency Medicine  
Uniformed Services University  
Bethesda, MD

**Harvey B. Pollard, MD, PhD**

Professor, Department of Anatomy, Physiology, and Genetics  
Uniformed Services University  
Bethesda, MD

**Eric B. Schoomaker, MD, PhD, FACP**

Lieutenant General, U.S. Army (Retired)  
Professor Emeritus, Military and Emergency Medicine  
Uniformed Services University  
Bethesda, MD

**Jun Shigemura, MD, PhD**

Professor, Faculty of Health Sciences  
Mejiro University  
Saitama, Japan

**Lars Weisæth, MD, PhD**

Lieutenant Colonel, Norwegian Armed Forces Medical Service (Retired)  
Professor Emeritus, Institute of Clinical Medicine  
University of Oslo  
Oslo, Norway



Robert J. Ursano, MD, is a world-renowned leader in military psychiatry, traumatic stress research, and public health policy. A retired Colonel in the United States Air Force (USAF), Dr. Ursano's distinguished service began more than four decades ago. His early career included a foundational assignment at the U.S. Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine, where he conducted groundbreaking work on traumatic stress with Vietnam-era Prisoners of War—research that would eventually shape the modern understanding of combat-related mental health.

Dr. Ursano joined the faculty of the Uniformed Services University (USU) in 1979, later serving as Chairman of the Department of Psychiatry for 25 years. In this role, and as the founding Director of the Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress (CSTS), he transformed the department into a global epicenter for behavioral health. His leadership fostered a community of excellence that secured over \$200 million in research funding from the DoD, NIMH, and CDC to support the well-being of the American warfighter.

His research is characterized by its unprecedented scale. Dr. Ursano served as a Principal Investigator for Army STARRS, a massive collaboration that remains the most comprehensive study of suicide risk and resilience ever conducted in the military. This project integrated over 50 databases and leveraged AI and machine learning to develop predictive models, such as the SAFEGUARD algorithm, to identify high-risk soldiers for early intervention. His years of commitment to the biological foundations of trauma also led to the founding of The VA National PTSD Brain Bank, the first resource of its kind dedicated to investigating the physical impact of trauma on the human brain.

Beyond his research, Col (Ret.) Ursano is a seminal figure in disaster psychiatry. He was the first Chairman of the American Psychiatric Association's Committee on Psychiatric Dimensions of Disaster and has led investigations into the psychological aftermath of mass traumas, including the 9/11 Pentagon attack and the COVID-19 pandemic. A prolific scholar, he has authored or edited over 500 publications and 22 books, including the definitive Textbook of Disaster Psychiatry.

His influence extends to the highest levels of government, where he has provided expert counsel to the Department of Defense, the NIMH, and NATO to shape mental health policy. In recognition of his "unparalleled contributions to military medicine," Dr. Ursano has received Lifetime Achievement Awards from the Military Health System Research Symposium (MHSRS), the International Traumatic Stress Society, and the Association of Military Surgeons of the United States (AMSUS). He is a Distinguished Life Fellow of the American Psychiatric Association and a recipient of the Department of Defense Humanitarian Service Award.



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