



Distinguished Alumna

Sharon A. Brangman, MD '81, FACP, AGSF

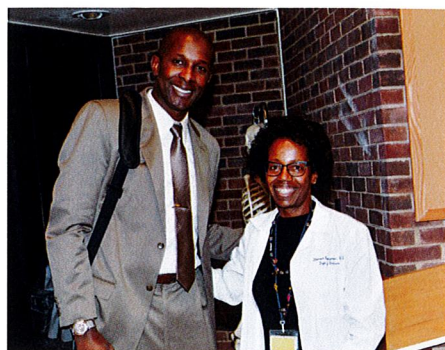
For nearly four decades, Sharon A. Brangman, MD '81, transformed the care of older adults while helping establish geriatrics as a vital medical specialty in Central New York and across the nation. A nationally recognized geriatrician, educator, researcher, and advocate, she built one of New York State's premier academic geriatrics programs, advanced the diagnosis and treatment of Alzheimer's disease, championed diversity in clinical research, while training generations of physicians dedicated to improving the health and independence of older adults.

Born in Brooklyn, New York, Brangman moved to Syracuse as a teen, where she graduated from Nottingham High School. She earned

a bachelor's degree in biology from Syracuse University in 1977 before receiving her medical degree from Upstate Medical University in 1981. As a student, she was awarded the Rosamond Gifford Scholarship, the National Health Service Corps Scholarship, and the Dr. Leon Berman Memorial Scholarship.

Following graduation, she completed a residency in Social Medicine at Montefiore Medical Center in the Bronx and fulfilled her National Health Service Corps commitment by providing primary care in an underserved New York City community. It was there that she discovered the work that would define her career. While younger patients often focused on getting sick notes to stay home from work or school, her older patients—despite living with multiple chronic illnesses—were determined to remain active and independent. Their resilience inspired her to pursue a fellowship in geriatric medicine at Montefiore, then one of the nation's emerging training programs in the specialty.

Brangman joined the faculty at Upstate in 1989, when geriatrics was still a relatively new field. Recognizing the growing needs of an aging population, she dedicated herself to building comprehensive services for older adults. Over the next 37 years, she transformed what was once a small division within the Department of Medicine into today's Department of Geriatrics, serving as its founding chair beginning in 2018.



Dr. Brangman with Damon Tweedy, MD, author of *Black Man in a White Coat*, after his 2016 campus lecture

Along the way, she established the Geriatric Medicine Fellowship Program, served as chief of the Division of Geriatrics for two decades, and mentored countless physicians who now practice throughout the country.

Brangman's clinical interests naturally led her to Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. Under her leadership, Upstate's Alzheimer's Disease Assistance Center evolved into a New York State Center of Excellence for Alzheimer's Disease (CEAD), making it the only center in the region to provide comprehensive evaluation, treatment, caregiver support, and clinical research for Alzheimer's disease and other dementias. The designation expanded services throughout Central New York and established Upstate as a regional leader in dementia care.

She also expanded opportunities for patients to participate in ground-



Dr. Brangman at a 2014 press conference announcing the creation of the State of New York Network Aging Partnership (SNAP) to coordinate collaborative research across SUNY's four medical universities



Dr. Brangman in her office in 2016

breaking clinical trials. Before the program was established, many Central New Yorkers had to travel to New York City or Boston to enroll in Alzheimer's studies. Today, patients can participate in cutting-edge research close to home, giving them early access to promising therapies while helping advance discoveries for future generations.

Among Brangman's most influential accomplishments has been her commitment to ensuring that medical research reflects the diversity of the populations it serves. After recognizing the lack of representation of Black, Latino, and other underrepresented populations in Alzheimer's clinical trials, she secured funding from the National Institute on Aging to establish Upstate's Equity Research Core. The innovative program builds trusted community partnerships, educates older adults in the area about clinical research, and helps investigators recruit more representative participant populations. The model has dramatically increased diversity in Alzheimer's studies at Upstate and has attracted national attention, with other universities and research organizations adopting similar approaches.

Her leadership extended well beyond Upstate. Brangman served as president of the American Geriatrics

Society from 2010 to 2011 and chair of its board the following year, helping shape national policy, education, and clinical standards in geriatric medicine. She also served as president and chair of the Association of Directors of Academic Geriatrics Programs and has contributed to numerous national organizations focused on healthy aging, Alzheimer's disease, and medical education.

Her accomplishments have earned widespread recognition, including Syracuse University's prestigious Arents Award, Upstate's Distinguished Service Professorship, the Chancellor's Award for Faculty Service, the President's Award for Excellence in Faculty Service, the Loretto Foundation's John J. Costello Distinguished Service Award for Lifetime Achievement, and numerous honors recognizing her leadership in medicine and community service.

Even as retirement approached, Brangman continued developing innovative ways to reach older adults before memory problems became crises. In partnership with Syracuse University researchers and community organizations, she helped create community-based cognitive screening programs that identify early signs of dementia and connect individuals with appropriate

care and support. Building on that success, she expanded the model into rural communities by training Office for Aging staff to recognize cognitive impairment and facilitate earlier referrals. The initiative recently demonstrated promising results and is now being considered for expansion across New York State.

Brangman retired from Upstate Medical University on July 3, 2026, after nearly 37 years on the faculty, while remaining in a limited advisory role to support the transition to new leadership in geriatrics. Her legacy continues through the department she built, the physicians she mentored, the patients and families she served, and the lasting impact of her work to improve the health, dignity and quality of life of older adults.

