Obituary
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Renowned public health specialist
Stephen B Blount, who contributed
substantially in the fight against
infectious diseases such as malaria,
lymphatic filariasis, and polio, died
on April 30, 2022. Media reports,
however, did not reveal the cause of
his death.
In a statement dated May 23, 2022,
The Carter Center’s Chief Executive
Officer Paige Alexander and the
Vice President, Health Programs
Kashef Ijaz mourned the unexpected
death of Blount who had just retired
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impressive career in global public health.
The statement included a farewell
note made by Blount on his retirement
day from The Carter Center: there, he
suggested the staff to “Go brave” while
facing work-related challenges.
“I was fortunate to be blessed by
Steve’s wisdom, kindness, and joyful
moments”, commented Valery E
Madsen Beau De Rochars (University
of Florida, Gainesville, FL, USA), a
consultant for The Carter Center, in
Hispaniola. “[Steve] spoiled anyone
working in his environment with his
enthusiasm, unwavering commitment
to social justice, and compassion”,
Madsen Beau De Rochars told
The Lancet Infectious Diseases. “[He]
was kind and compassionate and cared
deeply about the people he worked
with and the people he served”, added
Greg Noland (The Carter Center,
Atlanta, GA, USA).
Noland said that Blount had a
wonderful sense of humour and a
sharp desire to take action in any
situation. “[Also], he could speak
hard truths with a calm voice and was
respected across public health fields”,
he noted.
Born in 1953 in Detroit, MI, USA,
Blount completed a Bachelor of
Science in Psychology in 1975. In
1978, he received his medical degree
from Tufts University (Boston, MA,
USA). From the University of Michigan
(Ann Arbor, MI, USA), he earned the
Master of Public Health in 1980.
Before initiating his work at
The Carter Center in 2013, Blount
served for more than two decades,
starting in 1988, at the US Centers
for Disease Control and Prevention
(CDC). While finishing his career at
the CDC in 2013, Blount was the
CDC’s associate director for global
health development. However, from
1997 to 2005, he directed the CDC’s
Office of Global Health; and from
2005 to 2010, he directed the CDC’s
Coordinating Office of Global Health.
At the CDC, Blount’s activities
included supervision of the Global
AIDS Program, global immunisation,
disease eradication, and initiatives
to control malaria and tuberculosis,
among others. He also worked in
CDC’s polio initiative, and during that
time the number of polio-endemic
countries significantly reduced from
41 to four. He also served as a leader
in the Global Measles Partnership that
cut down the global mortality from
measles by 39%.
Blount led The Carter Center’s
Hispaniola initiative that aimed at
eliminating malaria and lymphatic
filariasis from Dominican Republic
and Haiti. In this sense, Noland
commented that “The island [of
Hispaniola] is the last reservoir of
[malaria and lymphatic filariasis]
in the region. Other countries had
eliminated these diseases; [so] Haiti
and the Dominican Republic could do
it, too”.
However, at The Carter Center,
Blount was also involved in the public
health training initiative, in which
health-care workers in developing
countries were provided training in
maternal and child health.
Madsen Beau De Rochars recalled
that Blount always thought about
people in need. According to him,
Blount helped people as per their
needs and gave them vital advice.
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economy through tourism”, he added.
Blount worked as a mentor of several
public health specialists at CDC and The
Carter Center. He was fond of jazz music;
and he used to practice mindfulness.
The Carter Center statement praised his
modesty, clear thinking, and gentleness.
Commenting on Blount, Paul Weiss