

# Gunman kills cancer doctor

HOUSTON (AP) — A gunman fired several times into the head of a respected cancer specialist Friday morning and then fled from the M.D. Anderson Hospital and Tumor Institute while doctors tried unsuccessfully to revive the victim.

Dr. Fred G. Conrad, 53, the vice president for patient care at the University of Texas teaching hospital, was found dead at his desk in his first-floor office, police said.

"Evidently the doctor was surprised and was shot and the suspect fled the scene," police Detective Ted Thomas said. "We believe robbery was not the motive."

Detectives asked KTRK-TV staff artist Priscilla Coleman to sketch a man a witness saw walking briskly away from the scene minutes after the killing, which occurred between 6:30 a.m. and 6:35 a.m.

The man was described as about 5-foot-6, in his early 20s to mid-30s, wearing street clothes and short black hair, Thomas said.

Police Lt. H.W. Kersten said Conrad was shot several times in the head with a pistol. Police spokesman Raul Correa said Conrad also may have been shot in the shoulder or neck.

Kersten said a clerk in a nearby office saw a man hurry from

Conrad's office moments after the shooting.

"We have no idea who it is. The employee did not know him," said Kersten.

He said the clerk said she had never seen the man before and did not see him enter the office. Kersten said no one else appeared to be in the room with Conrad and his killer.

Hospital workers ran to the room after hearing the shots, but efforts to revive Conrad failed.

The slaying stunned Conrad's colleagues, who said they knew of no reason why anyone would want to kill him. Police also said they knew of no motive for the killing.



Conrad

## Patients, colleagues remember Conrad

HOUSTON (AP) — Dr. Fred Conrad worked hard, sometimes sleeping at the hospital because of his huge job demands. But his colleagues say he still had time for everyone, especially his patients.

"I really saw him as a whole person — an administrator, a physician, a husband and a father," said Joyce Alt, nursing supervisor at M.D. Anderson Hospital.

"He did this with a lot of grace. He was committed to all of these roles," she added.

Conrad was in his hospital office Friday, working, when an intruder shot him several times in the head and then fled. It was 6:30 a.m., not an uncommon time for Conrad to be already headlong into the day's work.

"His routine was to arrive here between 6 and 6:30 in the morning," said Dr. Joseph Ainsworth, associate vice president for patient care. "And he was always the last to leave at 6 or 6:30."

Conrad was Ainsworth's boss, vice president for patient care at the cancer hospital. But as well as an administrator overseeing 3,000 employees, the former Air Force colonel also was an expert in treating cancers of the lymph glands. Above all, he was a physician.

He insisted when he took the vice president's job that he be allowed to continue working with his own patients, said James Bowen, vice president for academic affairs at M.D. Anderson, a teaching hospital of the University of Texas.

"I suppose he got the most pleasure, really, out of taking care of his patients," Ainsworth said.

And his patients reciprocated, showering him with gifts — not expensive ones, just

something to let him know they cared, Ainsworth said.

"People would always bring him little things, and remember him on his birthday," he said.

One patient, 60-year-old Jack Crabtree of Amarillo, told The Houston Chronicle that Conrad was "an awful nice fellow. Yesterday, I was taking chemo(therapy) and he patted me on the bottom of my feet, just as friendly as could be."

Conrad's love for people didn't stop with his patients, Bowen said.

"It extended to everyone, to his staff, to his colleagues, to us who worked with him in his administration.

"You sit around and talk with him for a few minutes and the next thing you know he was interested in what your family was doing. We had sons who are not too far off from the same age and he delighted in telling me about his son's playing football. He just had an enormous interest in other people.

"He had an encyclopedic mind, particularly as it related to people," Bowen said. "He knew virtually all of the staff by their first names. Wherever he was in the building, he would run into anybody and address them by name and ask them about specific members of their families or what they were doing or their hobbies."

He was known as a man dedicated to his family — his wife, Ann, and five children: Claudia, 28; Roger, 26; Charles, 21; Elizabeth, 19 and Robert, 16.

"He was a devoted family man. The one time he would tell you ahead of time that he was going to take off early at 3, it was to see his young son play football in Spring,"

Ainsworth said.

He said the Conrads planned to leave for Christmas vacation in Mexico on Saturday.

The Conrads live in suburban Spring, meaning he had to leave home an hour beforehand to get to work by 6 a.m. Bowen said.

Steve Stuyck, the hospital's public information director, said the hospital "splurged" and got a phone for Conrad's car so that when an emergency arose while he was on the way home he could turn around and come back without first having to go all the way to Spring. He was the only one of the hospital's 200 doctors with a phone in his car, Stuyck said.

"He would regularly sleep in the residents' on-call area, the demands (of his job) were such. He really loved his work," Stuyck said.

"He seemed to thrive on work. The more he had the better he was," Bowen said. "I never ever heard him complain and I never saw him angry."

Dr. Charles LeMaistre, president of the University of Texas System Cancer Center, praised Conrad as a compassionate doctor, innovative cancer specialist and magnificent teacher.

"But more than that he was a friend, not only to his peers in the institution but to all of the employees. He was one of the most important and popular employees in all this institution.

"I don't know of single individual in this world that feels otherwise about Fred Conrad," LeMaistre said.