

Biography



## Eduard V. Ulrikh (1937–2025)

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### ABSTRACT

On June 2, 2025, the outstanding pediatric surgeon—one of the founders of Russian spinal surgery and the founder of the Saint Petersburg school of pediatric vertebral surgeons—Professor Eduard V. Ulrikh, Doctor of Medical Sciences, passed away suddenly. He was 87 years old—only 87, because his sharp and lucid mind, firm handshake, brilliant erudition, unwavering will, remarkable capacity for work, selfless dedication to his profession, and keen intuition for identifying cutting-edge trends in spinal surgery remained unaffected by age.

**Keywords:** Eduard V. Ulrikh; obituary; traumatology and orthopedics; spine.

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## Эдуард Владимирович Ульрих (1937–2025)

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### АННОТАЦИЯ

2 июня 2025 г. скоропостижно скончался величайший детский хирург, один из основоположников отечественной хирургической вертебрологии, основатель Санкт-Петербургской школы детских хирургов-вертебрологов доктор медицинских наук, профессор Эдуард Владимирович Ульрих. Ему было всего 87 лет. Всего — потому что его ясный и острый ум, крепкое рукопожатие, блестящая эрудиция, негибаемая воля, колоссальная работоспособность, беззаветная преданность любимому делу и интуиция в определении передовых трендов спинальной хирургии не зависели от возраста.

**Ключевые слова:** Эдуард Владимирович Ульрих; некролог; травматология и ортопедия; позвоночник.

### Как цитировать

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### 摘要

2025年6月2日，杰出的儿童外科专家、俄罗斯脊柱外科学的奠基人之一、圣彼得堡儿童脊柱外科流派的创始人，医学博士、教授Eduard Vladimirovich Ulrikh，享年87岁。虽言87岁，但其思维依然清晰敏捷，握手依旧坚定有力，学识渊博，意志坚毅，工作能力惊人，对所钟爱的事业无比忠诚，且在脊柱外科前沿趋势判断方面展现出卓越的洞察力，实属年龄所不能限。

**关键词：**Eduard V. Ulrikh; 讣告; 创伤与矫形外科; 脊柱。

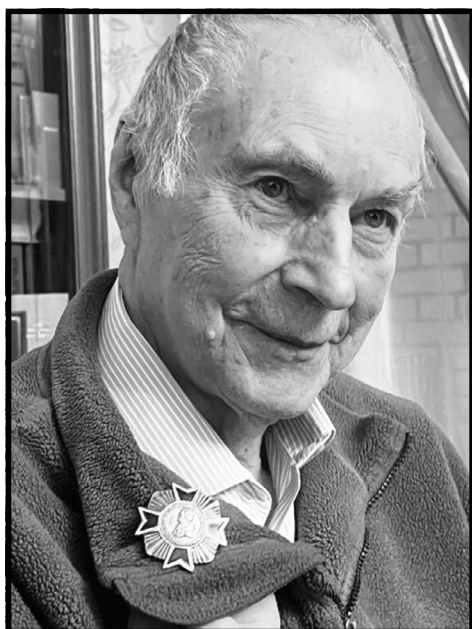
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**Fig. 1.** Professor Eduard V. Ulrikh, Doctor of Medical Sciences (1937–2025).

On June 2, 2025, the outstanding pediatric surgeon—one of the founders of Russian spinal surgery and the founder of the Saint Petersburg school of pediatric vertebral surgeons—Professor Eduard V. Ulrikh, Doctor of Medical Sciences, passed away suddenly (Fig. 1).

Eduard Vladimirovich Ulrikh's professional career was marked by various challenges. As a child, Ulrikh survived the Siege of Leningrad and evacuation. His father was repressed during Stalinism and rehabilitated only in 2011, which Eduard Vladimirovich spent 12 years to achieve. Ulrikh's choice of profession was predetermined by the war years and observing evacuation hospitals. Despite passing the admission tests, the institute's commission was concerned with the personality of Eduard Vladimirovich as a son of a repressed person with a German surname. After an in-person interview, the order for Eduard Vladimirovich's enrollment to the Leningrad Pediatric Medical Institute (LPMI) was signed by its first rector, Professor Yu.A. Mendeleva.

After graduating from LPMI in 1961, Eduard Vladimirovich worked as a surgeon in Arkhangelsk Regional Clinical Hospital for 2 years. He recalled it as one of the satisfying periods of his professional career, when he worked with experienced operating room nurses who had been through the Great Patriotic War and practically knew the difference between Esmarch's irrigator and Esmarch's mask. After returning to Leningrad in 1963, Eduard Vladimirovich permanently worked at the LPMI Department of Pediatric Surgery, progressing from a postgraduate student and assistant to head of the department.

In 1967, under the guidance of the renowned pediatric surgeon and corresponding member of the Academy of Medical Sciences G.A. Bairov, Eduard Vladimirovich

defended his Candidate of Sciences thesis titled, "Surgical Treatment of Post-Traumatic Upper Limb Deformities in Children." During the time when pediatric surgery required versatility, Ulrikh was involved in emergency and elective thoracic and abdominal surgery and issues related to pediatric anesthesiology and coloproctology.

In the 1970s, Eduard Vladimirovich began working on a then poorly studied topic—congenital spinal deformities. In 1985, he defended his Doctor of Sciences thesis titled "Surgical Treatment of Spinal Malformations in Children." When computers were emerging but not yet common, Eduard Vladimirovich managed to systematize data on over 500 patients and established a classification of congenital anomalies of the spine and spinal canal. At the time when specialized spinal instrumentation was unavailable in Russia, Eduard Vladimirovich created the first original metal structures for correcting spinal deformities in young children based on his own drawings. He developed unique operations for hemivertebrae, vertebral segmentation disorders, thoracic insufficiency syndromes, and spina bifida, primarily focusing on finding methods to correct these defects. Moreover, he initiated research on combined extravertebral pathology, spinal canal contrast enhancement methods, and anesthetic protection of spinal cord—all of which was studied when computed tomography and magnetic resonance imaging were just appearing in the medical practice and most surgical decisions were made based on spondylography alone.

Eduard Vladimirovich was ahead of his time when he organized the first training course in pediatric vertebrology in Russia (when the creation of this specialty in Russia was nothing but a discussion) and proposed the idea of a specialized emergency vertebrology service in St. Petersburg in the mid-1990s; however, he did not find support from the city's medical administration. Almost 10 years later, this idea was put into practice at the regional center for spinal injuries in children by Director of the G.I. Turner Leningrad Research Pediatric Orthopedic Institute A.G. Baindurashvili.

The merits of Eduard Vladimirovich are recognized by leading world experts. In 1999, together with Professor J. Dubousset (France), with whom Eduard Vladimirovich had been friends for many years, he organized the GICD (Cotrel–Dubousset Group) congress in St. Petersburg, which was attended by over 100 spine surgeons from Europe, Asia, and Africa. In the early 2000s, a comprehensive program was formed under the guidance of Eduard Vladimirovich Ulrikh, bringing together scientists, doctors, and educators from medical universities, marking the beginning of the St. Petersburg school of pediatric vertebrology, from which many of today's specialists leading medical centers, institutes, and clinics in Russia have emerged.

Eduard Vladimirovich Ulrikh's active life stance is reflected in his promotion of knowledge and educating

the young people. In 2004, he became the first recipient of the newly established S.D. Ternovsky Award for Great Contribution to the Development of Domestic Pediatric Surgery. Moreover, he joined the newly established scientific and practical *Russian Journal of Spine Surgery*, publishing an article on the classification of vertebral anomalies, which he coauthored with R. Winter and J. Lonstein in the very first issue. Eduard Vladimirovich Ulrikh was a member of the editorial board of several surgical and traumatology and orthopedic journals, the author of seven monographs, and the supervisor and academic adviser for 3 doctoral dissertations and 19 theses for the degree of Candidate of Sciences, along with numerous patents.

Eduard Vladimirovich gradually limited his practical work with age. Nevertheless, he remained a person whom anyone could ask help from, regardless of one's age or experience. Anyone who was fortunate enough to communicate with him remembered the genuine joy Eduard Vladimirovich felt when speaking about the ideas and successes of his colleagues and students. His presence in the operating room, calm voice, and practical suggestions made us work more confidently, allowing us to set seemingly unattainable goals and solve the most unusual situations.

Eduard Vladimirovich Ulrikh passed away at the age of 87, but he will remain in our memory as a wise teacher, colleague, scholar, and a truly great person. We express our gratitude to you for being by our side all these years.

*Students, colleagues, and friends*

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