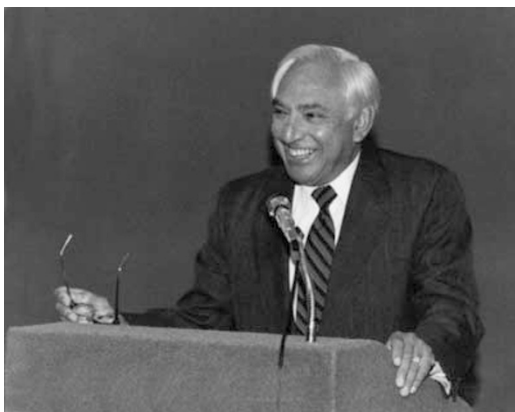


Obituary

Jack Harold Mendelson, 1929–2007

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Jack H Mendelson (77) MD, Professor of Psychiatry (Neuroscience) at the Harvard Medical School, Co-Director of the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Research Center at the McLean Hospital, and beloved husband of Nancy K Mello, died on 15 August 2007 after a brief illness. He leaves his wife of 33 years, two sons, one daughter, and four grandchildren. After graduation from the University of Maryland Medical School, he interned in Medicine at the Boston City Hospital and completed a residency in Psychiatry at the Massachusetts General Hospital, in Boston.

Dr Mendelson devoted his research career to studying the behavioral and biological aspects of alcoholism and drug abuse. As Chief of The National Center for Prevention and Control of Alcoholism, National Institute of Mental Health (1966–1970), the first federal program to focus on alcoholism, he effectively promoted the concept that alcoholism is a medical disorder and persuaded leading scientists of the importance of research on this complex biobehavioral disorder. Today, that program has evolved into the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, NIH.

In 1970, Dr Mendelson became Professor of Psychiatry at the Harvard Medical School and Chief of the Department of Psychiatry at the Boston City Hospital. In 1973, Dr Mendelson and Dr Mello established the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Research Center at the McLean Hospital in Belmont, MA. Today, this Center includes research programs in behavioral science, pharmacology, medicinal chemistry, neurobiology, neuroscience, and neuroimaging.

Dr Mendelson published over 480 scientific papers and books, and contributed chapters to leading textbooks such as Harrison's Principles of Internal Medicine and

Hormones, Brain and Behavior. He edited the Journal on Studies of Alcohol (1984–1991), and was on the Editorial Board of many leading scientific journals in substance abuse and psychiatry. He was awarded the Hofheimer Prize from the American Psychiatric Association (1965), the Jellinek Memorial Award for Research on Alcoholism (1978), a Research Scientist Award from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (1979–2007), the Distinguished Research Award from the Research Society on Alcoholism (1989), the Founders Award from the American Academy of Psychiatrists in Alcoholism and Addictions (1990), and in June of this year, the Nathan B Eddy Award for distinguished research contributions from the College on Problems of Drug Dependence (2007). Dr Mendelson served on the nominating committee for the Nobel Prize for Physiology and Medicine since 1982.

Dr Mendelson is best known for his multidisciplinary clinical research on addiction to alcohol, heroin, cocaine, marijuana, and tobacco. His pioneering studies involved direct observation of the effects of chronic drug and alcohol intoxication, and his findings challenged many prevalent beliefs. In in-patient clinical studies of drinking patterns in alcohol-dependent men, he found that contrary to anecdotal reports, chronic alcohol intoxication induced profound depression, dysphoria, and anxiety. Moreover, the prospect of alcohol withdrawal did not appear to control drinking behavior.

In treatment-related research, Dr Mendelson conducted the first in-patient clinical trials of the effects of the novel opioid mixed agonist–antagonist, buprenorphine, on heroin self-administration by opioid-dependent men. He found that buprenorphine, as well as an opioid antagonist, naltrexone, significantly reduced heroin self-administration in comparison to placebo treatment administered under double-blind conditions. Buprenorphine was more readily accepted by the patients because of its opioid agonist component, and today buprenorphine is widely used for the outpatient treatment of heroin abuse and dependence.

Dr Mendelson was fascinated by the interactions between drugs, hormones, and behavior. His innovative studies of the neuroendocrine correlates of addiction revealed that the hormonal milieu may influence the abuse-related effects of drugs. Dr Mendelson's research has directed attention to the importance of studying not only the effects of drugs on the endocrine system, but also the ways in which hormones may enhance or diminish the saliency of drug effects.

In addition to his preeminence as a scientist, scholar, and educator, friends will remember him for his warmth and generosity, his ebullient sense of humor, an inexhaustible reservoir of stories and jokes, and perfect delivery. He was also an accomplished photographer, a collector of antique maps and fine wines, an enthusiastic traveler, gardener, and cook. He will be greatly missed by all who knew him.

Those wishing to contribute to the establishment of a research award in honor of his memory may send donations to the Jack H Mendelson Memorial Fund, Development Office, McLean Hospital, 115 Mill Street, Belmont, MA 02478.

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