Molecular Psychiatry (2012) 17, 1052–1053

www.nature.com/mp

EDITORIAL

In memoriam: Wylie Walker Vale, Jr

Molecular Psychiatry (2012) **17,** 1052–1053; doi:10.1038/mp.2012.132

Wylie Walker Vale, Jr (1941–2012).
Molecular Psychaitry Editorial Board Member 1996–2012

Personal: Wylie Walker Vale was born in Houston, Texas, on 3 July 1941. While still in high school, he met and fell in love with his wife Betty to whom he was married for over 40 years. Wylie earned his bachelor's degree in Biology from Rice University in 1964 and his PhD in Physiology and Biochemistry from the Baylor College of Medicine in 1969. In 1970, after their marriage, he and Betty moved to La Jolla, California, where he began his illustrious scientific career at the Salk Institute in the Laboratory of Nobel Laureate Roger Guillemin. In 1978, Wylie set up his independent laboratory at the Salk, where he continued his groundbreaking work on endocrine peptides. Wylie and Betty enjoyed a full life together raising their two lovely daughters, Elizabeth and Susannah, reveling in their lives, their marriages and being blessed with the arrival of their first grandchild Celeste. On 3 January 2012, Wylie passed away peacefully at the age of 70 in their home in Hana on the beautiful island of Maui, Hawaii, a small piece of the rainforest that he and Betty were remodeling consistent with their love for raw nature. He was truly at peace in their own piece of paradise.

Career: During his distinguished scientific career, Wylie discovered a number of hormones and growth factors that provide a molecular link between the central nervous, endocrine and immune systems. In 1981, Wylie and his team discovered corticotropin-releasing factor (CRF or CRH), the primary regulator of an organism's endocrine response to stress. This hormone would later be recognized as a *bona fide* neurotransmitter in the central nervous system having implications in depression and anxiety-related disorders and effectively launching the field of neuropeptides as we know it today. A few years later, Wylie extended this seminal discovery with his discovery of growth hormone-releasing factor, as well as three additional peptides within the CRF family, the Urocortins, which are important modulators of appetite, metabolism, growth, reproduction and cardiovascular function. The impact of Wylie's work can best be exemplified by the number of ongoing clinical trials based on his discoveries. Virtually every major pharmaceutical company has developed specific CRF antagonists for the potential treatment of mood disorders, substance abuse and other stress-related diseases, such as irritable bowel syndrome. Molecules are currently progressing in clinical trials for post-traumatic stress disorder and alcohol abuse. In addition, the peptide Urocortin 2 is currently in clinical trials for the treatment of acute decompensated heart failure.

Wylie was Co-Founder of two biotechnology companies. The first, Neurocrine Biosciences, is a public company based in San Diego, founded in 1992, and was based largely on his work with the CRF system. The second company, Acceleron Pharma, is a privately held company founded in 2004 and based in Cambridge, MA. Acceleron Pharma is developing protein therapeutics targeting the transforming growth factor-beta (TGF-β) superfamily of proteins. Wylie and his colleagues were the first to characterize activin A, a member of the TGF-β/BMP family of growth factors, as well as the activin receptor type II, which was the first characterized signaling receptor for this family. Wylie remained on the Board of Directors for both companies.

Professional: Wylie has accomplished much in his professional and scientific career not the least of which was his election to the National Academy of Sciences (USA) in 1992. He was a well-respected leader in the scientific community. In addition to his election to the National Academy, he was elected as a member of several prestigious organizations, including the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences. He served as president of the Endocrine Society and the International Society of Endocrinology. Wylie also received a number of awards, including the Edwin B. Astwood Lectureship Award and the Fred Conrad Koch Award from the Endocrine Society, the Clinical Lectureship Award (British Royal Society of Medicine), the 4th Yrjo Reenpaa Lecture Award from the Finnish Cultural Foundation, the HB van Dyke Award, Foundation IPSEN Prize in Endocrine Communication, the Henry Dale Medal presented by the British Society for Endocrinology and the Rolf Luft Award from the Karolinska Institute. In addition, Wylie received Distinguished Alumnus Awards from the Rice University in 2000 and from St. John's School in 1995. Baylor College of Medicine recently informed him that he would receive a Distinguished Alumnus Award from the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences in April 2012.

From 1980 to the present, Wylie was a Professor and Head of the Clayton Foundation Laboratories for Peptide Biology at the Salk Institute for Biological Studies and, as of 2003, the Helen McLoraine Professor in Molecular Neurobiology. He was also an Adjunct Professor at the University of California at San Diego. During his tenure at the Salk Institute, he served as Chair of the Academic Council and as a member of the Board of Trustees. As a visionary and world-renowned expert in endocrinology and basic sciences, Wylie served on a number of advisory and program committees for key institutions including the Endocrinology Research Program of the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Disease at the National Institutes of Health, the Laurentian Hormone Conference, Searle Scholars Program, Society for Neuroscience, Massachusetts General Hospital and the National Academy of Sciences, Institute of Medicine Contraceptive Research and Development. In addition to his activities outside the Salk Institute, Wylie trained and mentored many young scientists during his career; he leaves behind a tremendous legacy.

Wylie made pioneering contributions to Psychiatry, particularly on the molecular, neuroendocrine and behavioral aspects of stress, and its effects on the organism. His discoveries enriched the field and the applications of his basic work had major roles in understanding mental disease. He was on the Editorial Board of

Molecular Psychiatry from the very beginning. His commitment and valuable input was greatly appreciated and will be sorely missed.

A pioneer in his professional life Wylie had this innate ability to intertwine scientific discourse with day-to-day humorous life events leaving you completely disarmed and struggling to keep up. With biting wit and unending humor, without pretense, he could relate to anyone, genuinely interested in what they had to say. We have lost a remarkable human being but he has left us a path to follow: not getting too caught up in our own trivialities, enjoying the moments that we share with each other and most importantly, taking care of family—immediate and extended. Wylie will be greatly missed by all who had the privilege of knowing this gentle soul.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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