

In Memoriam

Nancy Kishlar Mello

Neuropsychopharmacology (2014) 39, 3129–3130;

doi:10.1038/npp.2014.250



On 25 November 2013, the neuroscience community lost a wonderful friend and colleague when Dr Nancy Kishlar Mello died. On both personal and professional levels, Nancy enriched our lives and contributed directly and indirectly to our careers.

Nancy's passing has a special meaning to members of ACNP, an organization to which she actively contributed since 1969. Over the years she served as a member and chair of the Committee On the Use Of Animals in Neuropsychopharmacology, was a member of Council, participated on the editorial board of our journal, and was a member of the Ethics Committee. She and her scientific partner and husband, Jack Mendelson, were always available at meetings for advice and consultation, thereby enriching the careers of many young scientists and members of ACNP.

On a personal level, Nancy and Jack taught me that science is about more than numbers and statistics. Much of the work that is accomplished in our field reflects developing and maintaining an open mind, a willingness to learn from others, the ability to face one's own constant need to learn more, a dedication to teaching young colleagues, and the good fortune to have the opportunity of forming close interpersonal relationships and learning important lessons from our friends. Nancy was stellar at these skills, and many of my fondest memories of her

involve our informal walks, sharing a good glass of red wine on a cold evening, and dinners with her and Jack. They became cherished friends to my wife Judy and I, as well as professional colleagues for decades. During my career I probably learned more about the personality of science from Nancy and Jack than almost anyone else, and I am sure that I am not alone in that sentiment.

After reading her work for years, I met Nancy in 1975 when she and Jack agreed to speak at one of the inaugural symposia sponsored by the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Institute at the University of Washington, where I had recently been appointed director. Nancy's lecture was filled with fine science, and the university (and I personally) benefitted greatly from her presentation and her informal consultations. That visit was the beginning of a long, close, and warm relationship that seemed to immediately reestablish itself whenever we were together again, and remained a lifelong mainstay.

Nancy received her Ph.D. from Pennsylvania State University in 1960, after which she spent 2 years as a Research Fellow in Psychology in several Harvard University laboratories, eventually becoming Director of the Operant Conditioning Section of the Stanley Cobb Laboratories for Psychiatric Research. She remained with Harvard until 1967, when she joined the National Institutes of Health, becoming an integral part of a series of institutions that ultimately became the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), including the National Center for Prevention and Control of Alcoholism, and the Division of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. In 1974, Nancy moved to the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Research Center at McLean Hospital and the Department of Psychiatry at Harvard University Medical School, remaining at these institutions until her recent death.

Nancy's CV lists more than 400 publications, which have appeared in almost every major journal and influential textbook in our field. She is perhaps best known for her meticulous research with drug self-administration in a series of animal models, primarily with rhesus monkeys. The substances of interest included alcohol, cocaine, cannabis, and nicotine. Through her work, we have improved our understanding of brain physiology regarding alcohol and drugs, hormonal effects of substances, and improved our knowledge in the understudied questions related to substance use and problems in women. She and Jack were among the first to carry out similar alcohol and drug administration studies in humans dating back to 1966, including seminal studies regarding self-administration of alcohol, cannabis, and cocaine.

These explorations across species have combined to add important information to many aspects of our knowledge of the impact of alcohol and drugs and established the basis for future prevention and treatment. Nancy's intimate understanding of the physiological aspects of substance use has facilitated evaluation of a range of medications as

potential therapies for substance use disorders. These have included anatabine for smoking, along with drugs potentially useful in the treatment of stimulant dependence, including lofexidine and modafinil. She was one of the few investigators in our field to address the challenges involved in evaluating the effects and potential treatments related to concomitant use of multiple drugs, including her work on combinations of opioids and stimulants.

During her highly productive and busy career, Nancy was generous in her efforts to facilitate the publications of others. In addition to her role as co-editor of the *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*, she had leadership roles at numerous other journals. At the same time she worked on multiple NIH-related committees and task forces, was a member of the President's Biomedical Research Panel, an active contributor to the ACNP and the College on Problems of Drug Dependence (CPDD). She received many well-earned honors, including memberships in the Nominating Committee for the Nobel Prize for Physiology and Medicine, the NIDA Board of Scientific Counselors, the Research Society on Alcohol Distinguished Research Award, the

AMERSA Betty Ford Award, and both the Marian W. Fischman and Nathan B. Eddy Awards from CPDD.

In the midst of our sadness, it is important to remember that we have the opportunity of sharing our appreciation of all of the wonderful things that Nancy Mello has done for our field. Her stellar career began in earnest in the 1960s, a time when women in science faced unique and daunting challenges. Despite these obstacles, she led the way toward future improvements in our understanding and treatment of alcohol and drug use disorders. We are grateful to her not only for her scientific accomplishments, but for paving the way for the women in science who followed her, and enriching our lives with her friendship and unstinting support of young people entering our field.

This memorial is based on an editorial originally published in the *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*. 2014; 75(1): 191–192.

Marc A Schuckit¹

¹University of California, San Diego, San Diego, CA, USA
E-mail: mschuckit@ucsd.edu