

## IN MEMORIAM

## IN MEMORIAM John Gary Csernansky 1954–2022

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John G. Csernansky, Fellow Emeritus of ACNP, died on May 23, 2022 at the age of 68. John was accepted into membership in 1987 and was a member of the council from 2010 to 2012.



John received his BA in Chemistry from Northwestern University and his MD from New York University. He completed his Psychiatry residency at Stanford University School of Medicine and the Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Palo Alto, CA. He joined the faculty there after training. He then moved to Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, where for 18 years he led pioneering work in psychosis research and directed the Silvio Conte Center for the Neuroscience of Mental Disorders. John was recruited to become the Chair of the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at the Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine in 2008. When he retired from the Chair role, he had transformed the department from one that was primarily a clinically oriented program to an interdisciplinary powerhouse that excelled in education and research in addition to providing outstanding, state-of-the-art clinical care. He was viewed as a transformative, thoughtful, and

supportive leader by his faculty. He truly embodied a servant leader approach to his role as Chair.

John dedicated his professional life to educating and training the next generation of clinicians and scientists. He mentored numerous students, residents, and faculty. He was consistently involved in teaching seminars to Northwestern's psychiatry residents. When the current residents were asked to reflect on their experiences with John, they remarked they were grateful to have learned from such an inspiring and approachable physician scientist who regarded his role as an educator as a privilege. They looked to him as a role model who continued to be a lifelong learner regardless of his numerous accolades. His former mentees are leaders in many areas of research, education and clinical care. After stepping down as Chair, he devoted his time as PI of a NIMH Research Education Program to provide research training to psychiatry residents and fellows.

John's translational research advanced our understanding of the neurobiology of neuropsychiatric disorders, in particular the pathogenesis of schizophrenia and related conditions. John's collaborative work with engineers that used computational anatomy to define measurable neuroanatomical and physiological markers for schizophrenia was pioneering. While conducting clinical trials, John included neuroimaging measures of brain structure and function derived from his research as surrogate markers of treatment outcome, exemplifying the translational mission of a clinician scientist. John also led an important clinical study, published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, showing better prevention of relapse in patients with schizophrenia when they were treated with a second-generation antipsychotic medication [1]. John was particularly adept at creating cohesive and collaborative groups of researchers and clinicians from a broad range of disciplines who worked extremely well together.

Throughout it all—leading a department, continuing an intensive research program, and training the next generation of psychiatrists—John continued to see patients. Some were surprised that he prioritized patient care while juggling an incredibly demanding schedule. John, however, would humbly reply that clinical work kept him grounded and connected to what mattered most: the patient. To that end, John was committed to serving the needs of those impacted by mental illness throughout the Chicagoland community. He worked with faith leaders, community advocates, judges and law enforcement to build programs that brought resources for mental health care to underserved and marginalized groups of people.

Above all, John was committed to his family—his wife Cynthia and children Matthew and Julia. John was a talented violinist, an expert carpenter and craftsman, and a gifted natural sailor. He was never happier than at the helm of his beloved Cape Dory 30 cutter, with Cynthia on deck trimming the sails. The waters of Lake Superior and Madeline Island were his favorite places.

John was a beloved leader, colleague, mentor, and friend to countless many. He was kind, generous, thoughtful, curious, and supportive. He possessed a dry, clever sense of humor that warmed

a room. The two of us are honored to be representing many others on this note, and greatly saddened by his premature departure. His humanity and spirit cannot even begin to be captured in a written document like this one. He will be missed by all who knew him.

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#### REFERENCE

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