



IN MEMORIAM

In Memoriam Martin Adler, Ph.D



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Dr. Martin “Marty” Adler, Fellow Emeritus of the American College of Neuropsychopharmacology, passed away on July 5, 2022, at the age of 92. He grew up in Washington Heights, New York, and graduated from Bronx High School of Science and New York University. A veteran of the Korean war (1953-1955), his distinguished career in pharmacology began as a graduate student at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York where he earned his Ph.D. in pharmacology in 1960. He moved to Philadelphia in 1960 to join the faculty in the Department of Pharmacology at Temple University School of Medicine where he spent his entire career of over 60 years. He was elected a Member of ACNP in 1976.



Photograph Courtesy of Temple University/Photograph by Joseph V. Labolito

Marty was a tremendously talented and accomplished scientist. If we were to summarize his contributions, we would argue that he was “The Physiologist’s Opioid Pharmacologist” and a giant in his domain. His earliest work focused on the anti-convulsant effects of opioids, in which he made the seminal observation that lower seizure thresholds were part of the opioid withdrawal syndrome, a key finding that still has important relevance today. Marty also performed critical work in characterizing the effects of opioids on thermoregulation and analgesia, with a focus on identifying key roles for different opioid receptors and brain sites where opioids produce their neuropharmacological effects. He then extended his physiological pharmacology to interactions between opioids and the immune system. An outgrowth of this work was his prescient and bold hypothesis that chemokines are a third major system of communication in the brain, a hypothesis that is gaining more traction as we begin to unravel profound interactions of the immune system in the central nervous system.

Marty continued to pursue this line of investigation through the rest of his career. He found it particularly fulfilling because of its potential to provide a novel approach to help patients who suffer from pain.

Marty enjoyed building academic and research programs and bringing people together. In 1998, he founded a new research center at Temple University, the Center for Substance Abuse Research (CSAR). Through the CSAR, he created a collegial framework that encouraged collaboration and creativity. He was the consummate mentor to trainees and junior faculty and always open to anyone who sought his advice. He was Chair of the National Institute on Drug Abuse Study Section in the 1980s where one of us (GFK) did his first ad hoc reviews and will always remember him fondly for his patience, guidance, and wisdom. Marty’s enthusiasm for science and joy in seeing the success of others was infectious and provided a model for our own philosophy of mentoring.

Another great contribution that Marty made to the field was his service to the College on Problems of Drug Dependence (CPDD). He served as the Executive Secretary of CPDD from 1986 to 2015. His contributions during his long tenure were numerous, including helping guide CPDD from its original Committee on Problems of Drug Dependence to its current College status as a membership organization. Marty helped shape CPDD and its current mission to promote excellence in research by investigating substance use disorders via the development of scientists, education, and advocacy. For us and many others, Marty was CPDD itself. Not only did he win the Nathan B. Eddy award but also CPDD renamed the Distinguished Service Award to the Martin and Toby Adler Distinguished Service Award in honor of his many contributions to the College. He received numerous additional honors during his career, including the Faculty Research Award from Temple University (1996) and the Joseph Wybran Award from the Society for NeuroImmune Pharmacology for the promotion of new ideas in science (2001).

On a personal note, Marty had a big heart and an affable and outgoing personality. He greeted everyone with a smile and made them feel welcome and at ease. His door was always open. He was quick to laugh and share stories. Working with and mentoring trainees brought him great joy; in turn, he was beloved by countless students, colleagues, and peers. His love of science made him a great teacher, mentor, and director of the CSAR.

When not working, Marty enjoyed taking cruises with his wife, exploring new places, and reading mystery novels. He was immensely proud of his children and grandchildren. He was an avid supporter of Temple sports, especially their basketball program where he held season tickets for decades.

Dr. Adler is survived by his wife, Toby, his son and daughter, Dr. Charles (Dr. Laura) Adler and Eve Adler, his grandchildren, Ilyssa (Matt Wolf), Jennifer Adler, and Sarah Goldberg, and great-grandson, Jacob Shai Wolf.

We will all miss our favorite Physiologist’s Opioid Pharmacologist.

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