

EDITORIAL

Short tribute to Dr Hutchinson

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Dick Hutchinson and I met in the mid-1970s at the University of Wisconsin. He was in the Department of Pharmacy working on plant products; we had just begun to work with streptomycetes in Biochemistry. I needed advice on natural product isolation and he was becoming interested in molecular biology and the possibility of genetic engineering of antibiotics. We joined up in a project looking for plasmids in the producing strain of *Streptomyces erythreus*.

After I left Madison we kept in touch, and by the 1990s, when I moved to the University of British Columbia and started a small company, TerraGen, Dick was successfully combining chemistry and molecular genetics to make modified antibiotics. He was appointed chairman of our Scientific Advisory Board, providing sage oversight of the science and defending our research efforts against the extreme demands of venture capitalists. A proof-of-principle experiment, the cloning of a polyketide biosynthetic pathway gene directly from soil

DNA, was carried out in Dick's laboratory by a TerraGen scientist. When he joined Kosan in 2000, his association with our company ended, but we met often at meetings and spent many a stimulating and convivial evening.

Dick was an outstanding scientist whose achievements arose from his ability to recognize and take advantage of new technology; he was a pathfinder who made numerous notable contributions to modern natural product biology. Many would join me in attesting that 'Hutch' was a wonderful colleague and friend.

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