

Doctor I. Bernard Weinstein
(1930-2008)



It is with great sorrow that the scientific and medical communities mourn the passing of remarkable scientist, teacher, scholar, mentor, and friend, Dr I. Bernard Weinstein. Dr Weinstein, a world-renowned authority on the prevention and treatment of cancer, exemplified the goals and tenets of the Collegium Ramazzini. An innovator in the field of oncology research, his contributions proved vital earning him prominence and distinction amongst his colleagues around the world.

A native of Madison, Wisconsin, USA, Dr Weinstein was educated at the University of Wisconsin,

earning both a Bachelor of Science in 1952 and a Medical Degree in 1955. He later pursued his clinical training in internal medicine at Montefiore Hospital in New York. Additionally, he received clinical and laboratory research training at the National Cancer Institute, Harvard Medical School, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In 1961, Dr. Weinstein was appointed assistant professor of medicine at Columbia University, and was promoted to full professor in 1973.

During his tenure at Columbia, Dr Weinstein held four distinguished positions there: Frode Jensen Professor of Medicine, Professor of Genetics and Development, Professor of Public Health and Director Emeritus of the Herbert Irving Comprehensive Cancer Center. He was also the head of the Herbert Irving Comprehensive Cancer Center (1985-1996) and directed the Division of Environmental Science for the School of Public Health (1977-1990). His contributions to these programmes lead to the development of several cancer research programmes of international distinction. Throughout his career, he continued teaching and was actively involved in research until a few days before his passing.

Dr Weinstein was a consummate researcher, and was responsible for noteworthy advances in the fields of molecular carcinogenesis and preventive oncology. As early as the 1970s, Dr Weinstein uncovered evidence to suggest that environmental constituents, such as benzopyrene, were sources of cancer. Moreover, he established the dangers present in processed meats and pickled foods in the form of nitrosamines. The significance of Dr Weinstein's contributions and his vast knowledge of molecular genetics led to the evolution of a new field of study, molecular epidemiology. Dr Weinstein's uncanny

ability to unravel the molecular mystery of multi-stage carcinogenesis facilitated the advancement of various strategies to combat and prevent cancer. The culmination of this research was the theory of oncogene addiction, which asserted that cancer cells are “addicted” to the continual activity of specific oncogenes and serve as an “Achilles heel” for molecular targeting.

Dr Weinstein was a prolific writer, leaving behind a scientific legacy of more than 600 articles. Most recently, he served as an editor for the centennial series of articles on the history of cancer research for the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR). In recognition of his talents and achievements, Dr Weinstein received appointments to various national and international advisory committees as well as numerous honours. From 1990-1991, he served as president of the AACR, which awarded him the Clowes Award in 1987. In 2001, he was awarded the Anthony Dipple Carcinogenesis Award, followed by the Charles Heidelberger Award for Cancer Research in 2004. Dr Weinstein was a member of the Institute of Medicine of the US National Academy of Sciences and the American Association of Physicians. He was also a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the UK Royal Academy of Medicine and the Collegium Ramazzini.

Dr Weinstein’s longstanding relationship with the Ramazzini Foundation was characterized by his generosity of spirit and profound intellectual insight.

His vast knowledge served as an impetus for numerous, productive collaborations. I had the privilege of working with Dr Weinstein, as a research scientist, for the last seven years. Along with Dr Morando Soffritti, we developed a study on the chemopreventive potential and molecular effects of herbal extracts and components on Sprague-Dawley rats.

Most assuredly, Dr. Bernard Weinstein’s contributions to the field of oncology research will endure, serving both colleague and patient alike for years to come. His dedication toward academia, research and science was of such spirit that he often remarked that he considered his students, fellow scientists and mentees to be his second family. A warm, witty man with a keen sense of humour, Dr Weinstein was a devoted husband, father, and grandfather. He is survived by his wife, Joan, their three children and two grandchildren. We celebrate the life of this accomplished, brilliant man who left an indelible mark on the lives of all of those who were fortunate to know him.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Herbert Irving Comprehensive Cancer Center at the Columbia University Medical Center, 630 West 168th St., New York, NY 10032.

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