
IN MEMORIAM

Edward Geller, 1928–1997

By its very nature the American College of Neuropharmacology (ACNP) has a unique membership and the loss of one is a loss for science. On March 13, 1997 we all lost a uniquely penetrating mind and talent as Dr. Edward Geller, Emeritus Fellow of the ACNP, was at last conquered by Parkinson's Disease.

Dr. Geller was one of the first neurochemists in the ACNP, elected to membership five years after its inception. It was a time when the relevance of research on brain and body to the treatment of mind was fiercely contested. The ACNP and biological psychiatry were born out of that conflict. Early monographs like "Biochemistry and Behavior" co-authored by Dr. Geller along with S. Eiduson, B. Eiduson, and A. Yuwiler, and Ted Sourkes's "Biochemistry of Mental Health" were the opening guns in the fight. The issue is now all but settled but the battles were long and Ed Geller was among its early soldiers.

Dr. Geller began his career as a dye chemist before returning to UCLA to study under Max Dunn in chemistry. He obtained his Ph.D. in biochemistry with a thesis on microbiological studies of nucleosides and alpha-hydroxy fatty acids. He was then promptly drafted. Two years later he emerged from an Army clinical laboratory in New York to return to UCLA and to the freshly created Neurobiochemistry laboratory at the West Los Angeles Veteran's Administration under the direction of Samuel Eiduson. The laboratory at that time was concerned with the pharmacokinetics of the new phenothiazine neuroleptics and with the metabolism of serotonin. Research meetings with N.Q. Brill, then chairman of Psychiatry at UCLA, culminated in work on the biology of schizophrenia. The coming of Shawn Schapiro to the group added laboratory counterparts in the form of studies on developmental endocrinology and metabolic adaptation to stress.

A new theme was introduced in 1970 by E. Ritvo. Anxious to examine blood serotonin in autism, Ritvo had John Menkes include blood from autistics among controls during ongoing studies at the Neurobiochemistry labora-



tory on blood serotonin in phenylketonuria. The results replicated the earlier findings of Schain and Freedman of hyperserotoninemia in autism. They also led to a long collaboration to clarify its significance. Late in those studies was a small trial of fenfluramine in hyperserotonemic autistics with the goal of assessing the link, if any, between blood serotonin and clinical status. As expected, the treatment lowered blood serotonin. Less expected, it also led to clinical improvement. Thanks to subsequent large multicenter efforts it is now clear that only a small fraction of autistic children are responders, that response is variable in magnitude, and that blood serotonin concentrations do not identify responders. While the clinical problem remains, the studies were a powerful stimulus to research in this area and provided evidence for a multitietiological underpinning to the syndrome.

Slowly, however, Parkinsonism robbed Ed of the joy of benchwork, the physical ease required to plan and conduct research and, finally, of life itself. Someone once said that science produces endless ripples in the human mind. Ed Geller's life produced endless ripples in the minds and lives of all who knew him or read his work.

Dr. Geller is survived by his wife, Professor Lila B. Geller, and his three children, David Alan Geller, Dr. Jonathan Barry Geller, and Michael Stephen Geller, Esq.

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