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Deconstructing Blood Cell Research
Building the Hematology Community



In Memory of Hal E. Broxmeyer



- January 06, 2022



The ISEH community is deeply saddened by the recent loss of Dr. Hal E. Broxmeyer, Distinguished Professor, Mary Margaret Walther Professor Emeritus, Professor of Microbiology and Immunology, and Senior Advisor to the Director of the National Cancer Institute-Designated Indiana University Simon Comprehensive Cancer Center at the Indiana University School of Medicine (IUSM). Hal was a revered member of the ISEH community, having previously served as President in 1991. Our deepest condolences extend to his family, colleagues at IUSM, and collaborators around the world who are suffering from this loss. More details about Hal's remarkable career and scientific accomplishments can be found in an obituary in *Experimental Hematology* in our February edition. To accompany that piece, in this Simply Blood blog please find some additional testimonials from colleagues, mentees, and friends.

Hal was the consummate scientist, mentor, and truly a special person. He believed in people and in the joy of scientific discovery, and his infectious love for stem cells and hematopoiesis inspired all of us every day. I am glad to have known Hal, and we are all better for having had him as a leader in our field.

- Ross Levine, Memorial-Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

Although I was aware of Hal's outstanding contributions to hematology for many years, I only got to know him more recently through a grant review committee that I chaired. When Harold Varmus was President of MSKCC, he asked me to chair a review committee for the New York Tri-Institution Stem Cell Initiative. The committee has met nearly every year for about a decade and is charged with evaluating collaborative grants. Participation in the review committee is an enjoyable experience (as opposed to most grant reviews) and comes with compensation better than the NIH day rate, as well as a trip to New York City. Hal quickly accepted my invitation to join the committee at its inception and participated as recently as last Spring. I was impressed with Hal's commitment to top-flight science and his fairness and generosity. He was at his best at these meetings as he just loved New York and his home borough Brooklyn. Despite my background, having grown up in Manhattan and the Bronx, we bonded over our shared New York heritage. I will miss Hal as he was not only a superb investigator but a wonderful individual who had a zest for life. He was truly special.

- Stuart Orkin, Harvard Medical School

Hal Broxmeyer was a force of nature. I knew Hal for over 40 years. I am having great difficulty dealing with his loss and cannot really comprehend that he will not be at the next scientific meeting or be there for an a brief conversation on the phone or a visit to New York with Beth. In the early 1980's I recruited Hal to join the Division of Hematology /Oncology at the Indiana University School of Medicine. There are many other distinguished members of that section that I recruited who have gone on to great things, but Hal was the cream of the crop not only academically but also at a personal level. Coming to Indiana was an odd fit for Hal with his strong Brooklyn accent and his insatiable appetite for work but Hal adapted and became a Hoosier in the best sense of the word and flourished in his new home with Beth and his two lovely sons. Hal was all business but had a wonderful sense of humor and a true zest for life. He was demanding but always supportive of his colleagues and trainees. I am not going to focus on Hal's professional achievements which others will deal with, but rather on his personal qualities. Both being New Yorkers we frequently squabbled as people from New York do, but these conflicts never interrupted a strong bond that existed between the two of us. We both came from working class families and felt the need to achieve. We understood each other. This common background created an unbreakable bond between us. Hal loved science and he loved challenges. He loved the process of discovery and he always refused to give up .He loved to talk about science with not only the leaders of the field but also any student or junior faculty member who approached him. He was critical and demanding not only of the efforts of others but also of his own work. When Hal got sick and lost his larynx he refused to give in. He acted like his physical

condition was a mere inconvenience; something that was not going to break his stride. Remarkably he was correct. About 5 years ago Hal gave a lecture at Mount Sinai that was scientifically impressive but from a personal point of view was awe inspiring. I must say at the end of the talk I had tears in my eyes. The bravery that Hal displayed was inspirational and the lessons that he taught me will never be forgotten. On that day I realized I respected Hal Broxmeyer the scientist but loved Hal Broxmeyer the man. It was my honor to know him and his family for over 40 years.

- Ron Hoffman, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai

Hal is “old fashioned”- in a gentleman’s way that represents a generation of scientists’ attitude and demeanor in critical thinking, mentoring, sharing discoveries, and fostering an encouraging environment to bring colleagues together. I admire Hal’s openness and attitude toward scientific publishing and knowledge sharing; while he’d be proud to publish a paper in Cell, he was as proud to share his discoveries published in a minor journal that he equally valued. He had always led the field of hematopoietic stem cell biology with interesting data and ideas. I wish our later generations can continue to look up to his accomplishments as well as his way of doing science.

- Yi Zheng, Cincinnati Children’s Hospital

The first thing I knew about Indiana University School of Medicine was Hal Broxmeyer. His scientific bona fides were without peer—Hal was the only non-physician president of the American Society of Hematology, and was an international leader in hematopoiesis. But on a personal level, he was a trusted source of wisdom and support for me. I feel fortunate to have called him a colleague and a friend, and I will miss him very much.

- Jay L. Hess, Indiana University

Hal was a pioneer in the field and always very supportive of my career- either with some advice about research projects or a needed letter of support. However, what stands out most to me is how he was always so excited about the latest research from his lab. Even in his 70s and after he had been president of ASH, he still presented posters at the annual ASH meeting with the same enthusiasm as a new graduate student- making sure everyone understood the key points. He is still an inspiration by remembering his passion for this field and will be very much missed.

- Dan Kaufman, UCSD

Hal was a wonderful man and a giant in the field of hematopoiesis, and his passion, knowledge, and scientific rigor inspired me and many other people. As someone who is not an expert in blood cell development, I was thrilled when a person of Hal’s stature showed great interest and enthusiasm for collaborating with me on the role of the DEK protein in hematopoiesis. I was enthusiastic about this work for several distinct reasons. First, for the joy and excitement of working with Hal. Second, the work itself and the relevance to hematopoiesis, a subject that I do not study on the basic science level but problems

with which I see frequently in my clinical duties. Third, my laboratory has worked for many years on the DEK protein and certain mysteries about it were very hard to solve at a biological level. Because of Hal's rigor, enthusiasm, fantastic work ethic, and deep knowledge, several of these mysteries were solved in ways that were very satisfying. So, I will miss Hal so very much as a person and as a scientist, and I am only glad that I had the opportunity to work with him and to become his friend.

- David Markovitz, University of Michigan

I met with Hal while I joined the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology at IUSM in the summer of 2007. Ever since then, he had been particularly supportive and friendly to me and my people in the lab. There are a number of examples for how he has been very supportive to me. One of them was when I mentioned to him that I would like to nominate Arnie Levine, my former postdoc mentor, to give a lecture to our Simon Cancer Center, he was quite excited and supportive to this idea. He said, he has been trying to get Arnie to visit IUSM, and thus this would be a great idea. Also, anytime when I tried to seek his suggestions, scientific ideas, and reagents, Hal had been always positive and responded to my requests very promptly. To me, Hal is a positive figure at IUSM, who had influenced several generations of faculty and junior trainees on and off the campus. He also shared his personal experience of training a PhD student and a postdoc with me. During my 4.5 years at IUSM (2007-2011), I had always had pleasant interactions and productive conversations with him, and never heard anything bad about him. No doubt, Hal is not only a wonderful and highly achieved scientist in the fields of hematology, immunology, stem cells and oncology, but also a scientific and educational Legend at IUSM as well as in the country. I felt very sad and sorry about not being able to invite him over to give a talk to my department at Tulane School of Medicine, which becomes my ever regret as I once promised so to him. I will miss him very much as a dear friend, a great colleague, and a supportive mentor. Wish him to rest peacefully in heaven!

- Hua Lu, Tulane University

Dr. Broxmeyer has been a truly inspiring mentor to me over the past 10 years since I met him during the TRTH program. Since then he has helped me in many ways, he was a mentor on my ASH scholar award, he reviewed my papers and my grants with the most insightful and helpful comments, he wrote the best letters of recommendation for me, he invited my family at his place in Indianapolis, we went for lunch in NY, he offered me a tremendous career opportunity as an independent hematology researcher, he always checked on me during the COVID-19 pandemic. He shared his innovative ideas with me and his busy work deadlines till few weeks ago. He believed in me and always supported my lab work with lots of enthusiasm. He was very proud of the pictures of his lab members over many years that he kept in his office. Most importantly, his wise words continue to guide me as a scientist and as a person and I would like to share one of many letters that young patients who received cord blood transplants sent him to thank him for his impactful scientific work. Thank you Dr. Broxmeyer! I am forever grateful.

- Fabiana Perna, Indiana University

Hal called me. When I sent my application for a faculty position at Indiana University, I had never been and

had only modest expectations. But Hal changed that. From his first call saying that he'd reviewed my application and wanted me to visit to the time he spent with me during the interview, Hal made IU seem like the place I wanted to be. His personal touches, like calling me directly and taking me out for dinner made it even more inviting. More importantly, he was the smart, energetic, and irrepressible person that I could see being a colleague, a mentor and a friend. I'm not sure I would have a career if Hal had not given me the chance to join the IU faculty. For that and so much else, I will miss him dearly.

- Mark Kaplan, Indiana University

Hal is not only an exceptionally accomplished scientist but also a dedicated educator and great mentor. I had various interactions with Hal, first during my postdoctoral in his group under direct supervision by Dr. Li Lu (1997-2000) and then as a research assistant professor in the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology at IUSM (2007-2009). I vividly remember how he helped me practicing for my first ever oral presentation in an international meeting multiple times despite of his busy schedule and my poor English at that time. When I started looking for independent position in 2008, he also helped me greatly in preparing my job talk. The beautiful summer morning I presented in his lab is really a mark for my career transition. He even offered me a position in his department. Another never-fading memory is that as an academic leader and a PI of a big group, Hal was still performing experiments by himself whenever he found time, counting colonies in stacks of culture dishes. I am indebted to his help in many ways in my career development and so grateful to have him as my mentor and role model. His dedication, diligence, accomplishments, warm heart and humor are deeply missed.

- Mushui Dai, Oregon Health & Sciences University

There are so many wonderful things about Hal, but one that strikes me most is how inclusive he was of early investigators. Hal provided me with opportunities to be part of some big research projects while I was a young PI trying to establish myself within the same institution where I trained. He didn't have to include me, but he did, and never made me feel like it was charity. I will always be appreciative of how he really helped launch my career. The field has benefited from his wisdom and his nurturing and mentoring of numerous colleagues. So much good about that man.

- Christie M. Orschell, Indiana University

Dr. Broxmeyer was an incredible mentor. He not only led me to this field, taught me the techniques, but also showed me creatively thinking and logically reasoning. I benefited tremendously from his mentorship. He was also a very kind friend. Every moment I spent with him was so joyful and unforgettable. His legacy will live on!

- Cheng-Kui Qu, Emory University School of Medicine

I remember first learning about Hal through an article published on IU website. During an interview about his work, he said 'only death' is going to stop him from keeping up with science. I was not his student at that time, but I knew from that very moment that he was the type of mentor I was searching for. Hal indeed

lived up to his statement. To my beloved late mentor, I promise whichever research path that life leads me to I will only do it in the best of interest for my patients. Just like how you have done it. You were not only a great scientist. You were to me like a true "physician" scientist. For all the impact you have made for human lives.

- Thao Trinh, Indiana University

Hal provided tremendous support and guidance to me when I was a junior faculty at Indiana University School of Medicine. He was happy to read my grant proposals and manuscripts and provided constructive advice. Whenever my grants or papers get rejected, he always told me that keep working on it and never give up. It is his support and guidance that helped me go through difficult times in my career and eventually establish myself in the field of hematology. After I moving to Northwestern University early this year, Hal and his lab members helped my lab completed some ongoing animal experiments. Hal is an exceptional scientist and my role model in science. I am so grateful to have Hal as my mentor, collaborator, and friend.

- Yan Liu, Northwestern University



ISEH

Life as Scientist

Research



Unknown January 6, 2022 at 6:16 PM

In the mid seventies when I was laboring in Portland, Oregon as a second- and third-year hematology fellow I had valued mentors involved in hematology research but none of them focused on hematopoiesis or had experience with the in vitro methods I was learning to use. I had been asked and supported to build a lab focused on hematopoiesis, but I needed the help of advisors from other institutions and happily found it by communicating with ISEH members in other institutions. None were as important as Hal was to my development as a clinician scientist. We first met after one of his ISEH presentations on feedback regulation of granulopoiesis. I was unknown to him (and anyone else) but got up the courage to stop him to ask a question while he was rushing up the stairs to his room between sessions. Rather than give me a quick "who-the-hell-are-you?" answer, he said "lets sit down to discuss this." It was a lengthy conversation. Since then, for nearly fifty years, he served as a collaborator, an advisor, and most importantly a trusted friend. It's honestly frightening to think of how my own professional life might have evolved without having known Hal. Hundreds of other investigators in centers around the world will share the same sentiment not on account of his scientific contributions and extraordinary productivity, but because of his listening skills, egalitarianism, direct style, collaborative inclinations, and commitment to training the next generation of investigators.

Grover C. Bagby, Oregon Health and Science University

REPLY



Unknown January 6, 2022 at 8:26 PM

It is with an immense sadness that I learn about Hal's passing away today. Hal pioneered experimental haematology particularly by demonstrating that umbilical cord blood was an important source of HSC for transplantation and his extensive work on the role of chemokines in regulating haematopoiesis (CXCL12 and many others), and HSC mobilisation. On a personal point, Hal was always supportive, encouraging, kind and generous with his advice.

Good by Hal, you will be missed.

Jean-Pierre Levesque

REPLY



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ISEH 2025 Society Award Winners

- [March 11, 2025](#)

On behalf of the Awards Committee, ISEH would like to congratulate the recipients of the 2025 ISEH Society Awards which will be presented at the ISEH 54th Annual Scientific Meeting . Donald Metcalf Award Winner - Constanze Bonifer The recipient of the 2025 Donald Metcalf Award is Dr. Constanze ...

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- [March 25, 2021](#)

Dear Friends and Colleagues, I write this message reflecting upon what was an unprecedented time for hematology and hematology researchers. Looking back on last year, I am truly amazed by how our Society reacted to our member's experiences with lab shutdowns, socioeconomic upheaval in reaction ...

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Lab Spotlight: Vanuytsel Lab

- *November 14, 2024*

Each month, Simply Blood spotlights a lab contributing to the fields of hematology, immunology, stem cell research, cell and gene therapies, and more. Get to know groups doing cutting edge research from around the world! This month, we are featuring the Vanuytsel Lab which is based out of the Center for ...

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