In memoriam
Dr. Mark Laudenslager

It is with deep sadness that I write to inform you that Dr. Mark Laudenslager died on Friday, December 4th, 2020, after suffering medical complications from an ongoing condition. Both his son and daughter were with him in his final hour.

Dr. Laudenslager received his PhD in 1976 from the University of California, Santa Barbara, followed by a postdoc at the Scripps Institute of Oceanography in San Diego.

He then embarked on an active career within the Department of Psychiatry, beginning in 1980 as a postdoctoral trainee in the second year of the Developmental Psychobiology Research Group (DPRG) T32 research training program. After his training, he began as Assistant Professor and climbed the ranks to full Professor of Psychiatry in 2008.

Beginning in 1995, he served as Director of the UCHSC-Primate Research Facility for six years. In the same year, he was elected as DPRG Executive Director and continued as a major influence in the DPRG, serving again as Executive Director from 2007-10. He had a major role in the planning of several DPRG annual retreats, including the one postponed this year due to Covid-19.

Dr. Laudenslager received the 2013 Norman Cousins Award from the Psychoneuroimmunology Research Society. This award is the highest honor given to an individual for outstanding contributions to research in psychoneuroimmunology.

Dr. Laudenslager served as Scientific Director of the T32 training program for 12 years before taking over the Program Director role in 2017. This NIMH-funded research fellowship teaches physicians, doctoral level clinicians, and doctoral level neuroscientists research skills in developmental psychobiology and psychopathology. He embraced the role of mentor to the trainees in his own lab as well as the program in general, having been closely involved both directly and indirectly in training more than 60 graduates of the T32 program. Previous mentees now serve in the academic community as professors, active researchers, scientific research staff, and senior administrators. He has mentored K awardees and postdoctoral fellows funded with foundation support including the WT Grant Foundation, the American Heart Association, and the National Palliative Care Association.

Since 1986, when he founded the Behavioral Immunology Laboratory in the Department of Psychiatry, active to this day, his research has focused on the mitigation of distress in target populations, particularly caregivers, and the promotion of salutary effects on individual mental health (reduced stress, anxiety, and depressive symptoms) and well-being (reduced inflammation, HPA activity, as well as telomere protection). Over the past 5 years, he collaborated nationally and internationally with more than 120 laboratories who sought his services, as well as providing guidance and expertise on the use of hair cortisol as a proxy measure of chronic activation of the hypothalamic pituitary adrenal (HPA) axis. Dr. Laudenslager’s group has been instrumental in helping bring this approach to a range of study populations ranging from field studies in black bears, to young children residing on American Indian reservation settings, to cancer caregivers.

Dr. Laudenslager will be remembered as a beloved colleague by the faculty, staff and trainees in the Department of Psychiatry, graduates of the T32 program far and wide, and collaborators throughout the University and nationally.

Regards,

C. Nell Epperson, M.D.
Robert Freedman Endowed Chair and Professor
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