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Fond Memories of John Fahey

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Abstract

John Fahey was one of the first investigators to study the then-new acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS). He made major contributions to the design of the Multicenter AIDS Cohort Study (MACS), and vigorously promoted novel and high-quality science as the MACS evolved. His contributions are highly valued.

Keywords

AIDS; immunology; Multicenter AIDS Cohort Study

PERSPECTIVES

I remember John! How fortunate I was to have been part of his circle and one of the recipients of his wisdom and scientific commitment.

Although I never had the privilege of being one of his students, I learned much from John over the 45 years we interacted and was often subjected to one of his scientific interrogations. Although I learned greatly from each them, I lived in fear of them.

John and I first met as part of the group he organized to discuss scientific advances in the field of multiple sclerosis. At the time I was doing a large study of multiple sclerosis with centers in Seattle and Los Angeles. Being a part of his discussion group benefitted me greatly.

When Michael Gottlieb first reported on the first cases of gay-related immunodeficiency disease I resolved to study the new syndrome, although at that time NIH was not providing money for acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) research and Reagan was actively ignoring the epidemic. John called me to see if I was interested. When I decided to do a cross-sectional study followed by a cohort study of gay students, it was John who gave me \$5000 and agreed to run all the bloods for T cell counts without charging me. I was able to parlay that study into the Multicenter AIDS Cohort Study (MACS),^{1–3} with John as my primary colleague. He took over responsibility for establishing the laboratories and setting up quality control procedures. Further, he gave me three of his best students: Janis Giorgi, with whom I had a particularly productive collaboration before she died tragically; Otoniel Martínez-Maza, who is now the co-PI for the Los Angeles MACS; and Najib Aziz, who has taken over quality control for all four centers of the MACS. In those early days, John and I

collaborated on a number of studies. He also made major contributions to the design of the MACS and kept all of us on our toes.

Knowing John has enriched my professional life as well as my personal life. Through the years I have had the privilege of meeting and working with many extraordinary people. John was one of the best! I will always remember him as a “kindly curmudgeon,” a brilliant scientist, a wonderful colleague, and a supportive friend.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS	acquired immune deficiency syndrome
MACS	Multicenter AIDS Cohort Study

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