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Brain, Behavior, and Immunity 19 (2005) 1–2
BRAIN, BEHAVIOR, and IMMUNITY
www.elsevier.com/locate/ybrbi

In Memoriam

Linda S. Crnic, Ph.D. (1948–2004)

Dr. Linda Crnic, a founding member of the PsychoNeuroImmunology Research Society, died unexpectedly following a bicycling accident in Bend, Oregon. She was with friends attending the reunion of a group of women who participated in a national leadership conference. Linda was professor of pediatrics and psychiatry at the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center (UCHSC) and the director of the Colorado Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Research Center. Linda contributed many hours and much energy to the development and activities of a nationally recognized postdoctoral training program in developmental psychobiology at UCHSC. Linda was among the organizers from Colorado for one of the first meetings of PNI researchers at a dude ranch, Tanque Verde, Arizona, in 1985. This early meeting led to several subsequent meetings that were called ''Research Perspectives in Psychoneuroimmunology'' and culminated in the formation of the PsychoNeuroImmunology Research Society (PNIRS) in 1993.

Linda received her masters and doctorate in experimental psychology from the University of Illinois, Chicago, after which she moved to Colorado for postdoctoral training at UCHSC in nutrition and metabolism. Her avowed research interests included developmental psychobiology and the neural mechanisms of developmental disabilities. Her early work utilized mouse models of immune system dysfunction to understand sickness behavior and the impact of cytokines on learning and memory. At a national level, Linda served in all four official executive positions of the International Society of Developmental Psychobiology, including president; she was well respected by her peers. Linda also served on the council for PNIRS. She gave many years of service

doi:10.1016/j.bbi.2004.10.002

as a member of NIH study sections, and from these experiences she was able to provide expert mentorship for fellows in our training program at UCHSC in developmental psychobiology, of which she was co-director. If is of interest to note that the most recent renewal applications of this training program received summary scores of 100 and 104 over the last two renewal cycles!

Linda was a woman of many sides, many of which we were unaware. I personally remember skiing with Linda the first time at a conference in the mountains of Colorado and being left behind in her dust as she went bouncing though a mogul field. This quiet, reserved woman was an outdoors enthusiast who loved Colorado and all it had to offer. She was a food and wine expert and always knew where good restaurants were around the world. She spent many hours with her son, Michael, as he learned the cello and worked on earning his Boy Scout badges; they skied together whenever they could and explored the canyon lands of Utah. She spent the last three weekends before her death at a recently acquired mountain cabin with her family relaxing, an unusual behavior for Linda.

Linda was always willing to give her time in support of trainees in our training program to help improve their NRSA applications. She offered the same support to colleagues as well. These skills in grantsmanship were highly respected and appreciated among students, fellows, and faculty alike. As Dr. Doug Jones, Chair of Pediatrics, noted, ''Linda was generous to the end; she was an organ donor.''

Across her illustrious career, Linda acquired an international reputation for her work in Down's syndrome (several of her papers are indicated in the bibliography). She spoke frequently at national meetings of parents of children with developmental disabilities and instilled in them a sense of hope that their children did in fact possess exceptional cognitive abilities that were frequently untapped. Her recent research focused on learning differences in mice that modeled fragile X and Down syndrome. Additionally, she was becoming interested in exploring molecular changes that might account for the learning deficits in these mouse models. Her current NIH-funded grants included studies titled ''Attentional Dysfunction in Fragile X Syndrome'' and ''Behavioral Characterization of a Mouse Model of Down Syndrome,'' not to mention the recent renewal of an NICHD Mental Retardation Center grant. As someone commented at her memorial service, Linda was ''just beginning to hit her stride.'' It makes us all too aware of how short life is and that we need to value each moment and hope we leave behind the kind of legacy that Linda left for her colleagues and students with whom she was affiliated.

Selected publications of Linda Crnic, Ph.D.

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