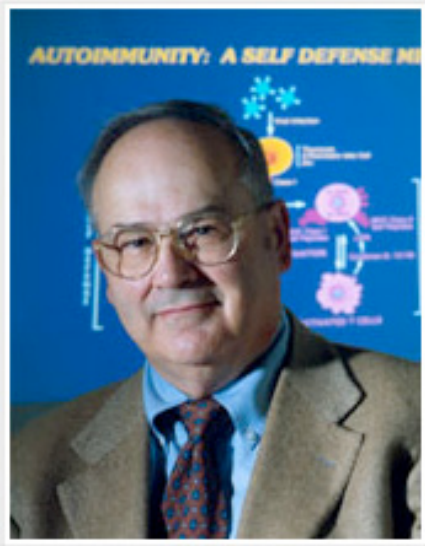


## Dr Leonard David Kohn (1935-2012)



Dr Leonard D. Kohn (Len, for his colleagues and friends), passed away on 18 April, 2012; giving in to a long lasting struggle with major health problems that he courageously and defiantly described as his “medical cruise”. I could hardly think of somebody else who could, like he did, pursue his goals in Science and entrepreneurship, fighting off impending diseases.

Len was a graduate of Columbia College and the Columbia College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York, where he did also 3 years of internship-residency at NY Columbia Presbyterian Hospital. In 1964 he joined the

National Institutes of Health (NIH) where in 1975 became Section Chief in the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK).

Overall, Len spent 36 years at the NIH; starting off as an enzymologist. In the early 1970s he moved to the field that would make him best known: experimental Endocrinology. His work has contributed significantly to the understanding of the cellular and biochemical properties of the TSH receptor and the development of an innovative approach to the treatment of Graves’ disease and other auto-immune diseases. His laboratory has been a magnet for scores of junior and senior investigators from all over the world. I joined Len’s lab in 1975 and we kept in close contact ever since. Undoubtedly, my association with him has affected my personality like no other previous or subsequent experience.

Moved by his insatiable desire to promote endocrine research, in the early 1980’s, Len was the driving force in the creation of the Interthyr Research Foundation (IRF). The intent was to patent and to commercialize assays to measure functional thyroid stimulating auto-antibodies in Graves’ patients. The patents were licensed to several companies and the funds generated were used by IRF to promote and support endocrine research in many countries.

In 2000 Len moved to Ohio University where in 2003 became the John Edward Watson Chair of Diabetes Research at the Ohio University College of Osteopathic Medicine (OUCOM). At that time the Interthyr Research Corporation (IC) was established and Len became its President. He retired from OUCOM to become Emeritus in 2008 and to serve full time as President of IC.

The outstanding contribution of Dr Leonard D. Kohn to experimental Endocrinology is summarized in 415 publications, 9 issued patents, and more than 20 pending patent applications. His work at Ohio University contributed significantly in the attainment of funding for the construction of a multi-million dollar Academic Research and Teaching Facility opened in 2010, and to the

establishment of the Diabetes-Cardiovascular Clinical Research Centre, which was cited by the State of Ohio for its excellence.

Len received numerous professional awards in recognition of research carried out under his leadership, including the Ingbar Award from the American Thyroid Association and the *Laurea Honoris Causa* in Medicine and Surgery from the University of Chieti, in Italy. He has been in the editorial board of the Journal of Biological Chemistry, Endocrinology (twice), and Thyroid and was a member of many scientific societies, including the American Thyroid Association, the American Society of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, the Endocrine Society, the American Diabetes Association. Len has been corresponding member of the ETA since 1975.

Dr Kohn has been inspirational to a multitude of young investigators. Far more important than his contribution to the biomedical Sciences, his exceptional drive, his intelligence and unabated optimism was contagious for the many who have had the fortune of working with him. He was exceptionally gifted in turning young doctors, with limited laboratory experience, into first class scientists in the fields of endocrinology and molecular and cell biology.

In my mind and in my heart, Len has symbolized knowledge, wit, optimism, courage, and that is the picture of him that should be remembered.

Salvatore M. Aloj