

Obituary

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Brian E. Leonard. May 30th, 1936 – December 27th, 2023

With profound respect and a deep sense of loss, we announce the passing of Professor Brian Leonard, Emeritus Professor, University of Galway, Ireland, a distinguished luminary in the field of Psychopharmacology. Brian leaves a long legacy that will persist through his innovative discoveries, especially in the fields of depression and immune–brain interactions and the many trainees who came through his Galway lab. Two of us (AH and JFC) had the privilege of having him as a PhD supervisor, and we all valued him as a lifelong mentor.

His exceptional journey in scientific discovery began with a BSc in Medical Biochemistry from the University of Birmingham in 1959 and continued with a PhD in Neuropharmacology. He had a career as a lecturer in Pharmacology at Nottingham University, marking the beginning of his groundbreaking work on the effects of barbiturates. This early work laid the foundation for his holistic approach to studying psychotropic drugs, integrating neurochemical, neuroendocrine and behavioural aspects. His significant contributions in the pharmaceutical industry, first at Imperial Chemical Industries Ltd. and then at Organon International, were pivotal in the development of CNS pharmacology, particularly in exploring antidepressant and anxiolytic agents.

In 1974, Professor Leonard became the Professor and Head of the Department of Pharmacology at the National University of Ireland, Galway. Transforming a modest beginning into a centre of excellence, he fostered a research-active, independent department. His tenure in Galway was marked by the supervision of approximately 50 PhD and 30 MSc students, authoring more than 600 publications and developing pre-clinical studies relevant to depression, dementia, alcoholism, and Psychoneuroimmunology. He developed the Olfactory Bulbectomised rat model, revolutionising the screening of antidepressant molecules and contributing significantly to the understanding of depressive illnesses.

Professor Leonard's impact on the scientific community was immense, and his international experience included sabbaticals in Leipzig, Göttingen, Maastricht, Munich, Hong Kong and Oxford, furthering his commitment to global scientific collaboration and education. He served as President of the British Association for Psychopharmacology from 1986 to 1988 and the Collegium Internationale Neuropsychopharmacologicum (CINP) from 2004 to 2006. His legacy is not just in his scientific achievements but also in his ability to inspire. He worked actively in the editorial board of *Acta Neuropsychiatrica*, and contributed to the high quality of the Journal. His enthusiasm for Psychopharmacology and, more lately, Psychoneuroimmunology has influenced many towards long-term careers in the field, and his lively presentations at numerous conferences will be fondly remembered.

It is worth noting his dedication to global education, evident throughout his career and especially in his role as chair and member of the CINP educational committee from



2006 to 2018. During this time, he demonstrated an immense commitment to spreading scientific knowledge worldwide, often travelling to remote locations to educate and inspire. One of us (GW) had the privilege of witnessing this first-hand on many of these trips. His efforts in establishing teaching programmes in various African and South American countries are a testament to his passion for nurturing scientific understanding across the globe. He trained so many of Ireland's pharmacologists, neuroscientists and psychiatrists at a time when research funding barely existed. He inspired us to think differently, to challenge dogma and to operate globally.

Those who knew Brian will remember his erudite nature and passion for social justice and that he brought a distinct humour to all situations. His love of travel, collecting butterflies, the rugged Irish rural landscape, his dogs and the arts were all part of a very rich life lived well. As we commemorate the life of Professor Brian Leonard, we honour a man who dedicated himself to the pursuit of knowledge, the betterment of human health and the nurturing of future generations of scientists. His influence will continue to resonate in the scientific community and beyond.

Our thoughts go to his loving wife Helga and daughters Heide and Ingrid.