

**Henry Metzger, M.D. (1932–2018), The
American Association of Immunologists
President, 1991–1992**

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Henry Metzger, M.D. (1932–2018), The American Association of Immunologists President, 1991–1992

The immunology community recently lost a great scientist, colleague, friend, and mentor, Henry Metzger, M.D., who died on November 20, 2018, at the age of 88 after a two-year struggle with cancer. Henry was a scientist at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and a member of the immunology community for nearly 60 years.

Henry was born in Germany in 1932 and immigrated to the United States in 1938, settling in the Washington Heights section of Manhattan. He attended the Bronx High School of Science and the University of Rochester before going to medical school at the College of Physicians and Surgeons, Columbia University. Henry first came to the NIH in Bethesda, MD in 1959 to participate in the Research Associate Training Program. From 1961 to 1963, he served as a Helen Hay Whitney Fellow at the University of California, San Diego before returning to the NIH for the remainder of his distinguished career.

Among Henry's most dramatic achievements were discovering the pentameric structure of IgM with Fred Miller and his cloning of the multichain IgE receptor. The latter was a particularly daunting undertaking at the time; in the late 1980s, only a few receptors had actually been purified and cloned. His discoveries with his trainees Jean Pierre Kinet and Juan Rivera on receptor biology and signaling by the IgE receptor became paradigms for this class of receptors. Henry authored more than 250 scientific articles and was elected to the National Academy of Sciences in 1992.

After serving from 1970 to 1986 as The American Association of Immunologists (AAI) secretary-treasurer, Henry was elected to the AAI Council, on which he served from 1986 to 1993; he was AAI president from 1991 to 1992. Henry's AAI service also included appointments as a member and chair of the AAI Program Committee, member of the International Union of Immunological Societies Advisory Committee, and AAI board representative to the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology. Henry received the AAI Distinguished Service Award (1986) and was selected as an AAI Distinguished Lecturer (1997). In 1999, he was awarded the AAI Lifetime Achievement Award, the highest honor accorded AAI members by the AAI Council.

Henry became the first scientific director of the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases (NIAMS), which the NIH created in 1986. For those of us who

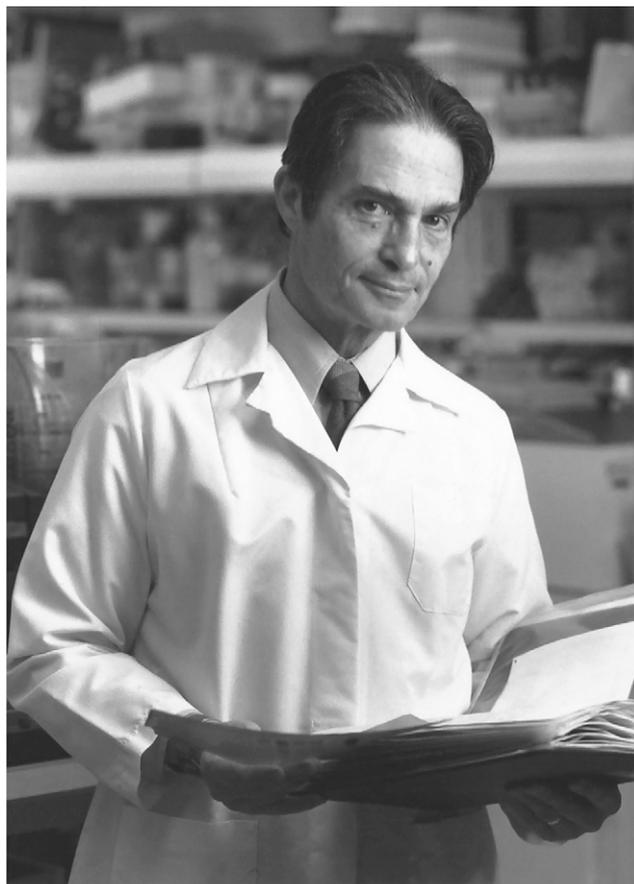


Photo courtesy of the Metzger family

Henry Metzger

were recruited by Henry to run independent laboratories in NIAMS, his loss is particularly profound. Henry embodied everything that one would want in a scientific director—intelligence, vision, fairness, honesty, confidentiality, kindness, and a sense of humor. Upon hearing of Henry's death, Dan Kastner, scientific director, National Human Genome Research Institute, NIH, commented that Henry had remained his "North Star" over the years he served as a scientific director himself. Henry was truly a scientist's scientist. John O'Shea, scientific director, NIAMS, NIH, reflected that it was both a terrifying and exciting experience to give his job talk to Henry. A source of inspiration beyond the science, Henry typically commuted by running back and forth between the NIH and his home in nearby Chevy Chase, and organized early morning runs at the annual institute retreat. In honor of

Other resources offering additional details about Henry Metzger include the following three oral histories and his autobiography: <https://www.aai.org/About/History/Past-Presidents-and-Officers/HenryMetzger>; <https://history.nih.gov/archives/downloads/metzgerinterview.pdf>; <https://history.nih.gov/archives/downloads/metzgerkhotinterview.pdf>; and <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/9597122>.

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Henry, we designate the candidates accepted into NIAMS' Scholars in Translational Research program, which gives outstanding candidates advanced training in basic mechanisms of disease, as Metzger Scholars.

Henry remained an advisor to the NIH Board of Scientific Directors after his retirement and was a liaison to the National Academy of Sciences on the important topic of "dual-use research of concern." He was also intimately involved for more than 40 years in the Foundation for Advanced Education in the Sciences, serving in various capacities and passionately advocating for continued education and cultural events.

Henry was active with the Washington, DC chapter of the Medical Committee for Human Rights (MCHR), which provided medical support during demonstrations in the nation's capital related to the Vietnam War, and in reaction to the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. As Henry recalled years later, "Many young physicians training at the NIH became familiar with our home, which served as the MCHR headquarters and staging center."

Henry enjoyed reading science and history, hiking in the White Mountains of New Hampshire, cooking and, of course, running. Among many other running events, he completed the Boston Marathon in 2007 and 2008. He volunteered with the educational nonprofit Learning Ally, recording scientific textbooks for blind and dyslexic students.

In his recollections in the *Annual Review of Immunology* entitled "Eureka! And Other Pleasures," Henry noted, "At a very early age I was much engaged by elaborate jigsaw puzzles; I have the vague feeling that my career in the laboratory has been an extension of the mindset that gets pleasure

from such games." He also said that his parents claimed he had a "sunny disposition," and that an optimistic outlook and the intense desire to solve complex problems served him well.

Henry expressed the view that "scientists who claim that the most important things have been learned and that only the details remain to be uncovered—and there are some great ones who claim this—are showing their age." Classic Henry—he really did love doing science!

In his 1991 AAI Presidential Address entitled "Transmembrane Signaling: The Joy of Aggregation," Henry closed by saying, "That new discoveries not only generate answers to previous questions but simultaneously reveal new levels of ignorance is a well-known phenomenon in scientific research. For those who drink only occasionally from this brew, it is intoxicating; for those who are not discouraged to imbibe repeatedly, it brings great joy—indeed it is the elixir of youth."

Henry is survived by Deborah, his wife of over 60 years; their children, Eran Daniel, Renée Butler Metzger, and Carl Elias; and his brother, Frank.

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