

Laurence A. Boxer, MD 1940-2017

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Abbreviations:

ASH	American Society of Hematology
ASPHO	American Society of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology
G-CSF	granulocyte colony-stimulating factor

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1 Laurence A. Boxer, a respected and beloved figure in the pediatric
2 hematology/oncology community, died on January 9, 2017, after many years of
3 treatment for multiple myeloma. He had only recently retired from the University of
4 Michigan Medical School, where he held the Henry and Mala Dorfman Family Chair
5 in Pediatric Hematology/Oncology, a professorship established in part to recognize
6 the extraordinary care he had provided to the Dorfman children.

7 Larry grew up in Denver, CO, where his parents ran a mom and pop plumbing
8 operation. His father hoped he would enter the family business, but told him “if you
9 cannot become a plumber, you can always become a doctor.” Larry chose the latter
10 and attended Stanford Medical School, where he was later honored as the J.
11 Wallace Sterling Outstanding Medical Alumnus of Stanford University. He trained as
12 a pediatric resident at Yale University, where he met his wife, Grace Jordison Boxer,
13 a medical hematologist with whom he has shared a lifelong devotion to family,
14 medicine, colleagues, students and travel.

15 After Vietnam-era military service at Tripler Army Hospital in Honolulu, where he
16 started to develop his research in neutrophil biology, he pursued fellowship training
17 in pediatric hematology/oncology at Boston Children’s Hospital, then moved to
18 Indiana University School of Medicine, where he and Robert Baehner established a
19 powerhouse of phagocyte research and patient care. In 1982, he came to Ann
20 Arbor as professor and director of the division of pediatric hematology/oncology at
21 the University of Michigan, where he has also served as associate chair for research
22 and then associate chair for faculty affairs.

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23 Larry's research focused on disorders of phagocyte number and function. His
24 contributions include major discoveries in the pathology, molecular biology, and
25 treatment of phagocyte disorders including Chédiak-Higashi syndrome, secondary
26 granule deficiency, and chronic granulomatous disease, as well as fundamental
27 investigations into the biochemistry of neutrophil phagocytosis, granule sorting, and
28 exocytosis. His clinical research in neutropenia included the seminal clinical trial of
29 granulocyte colony-stimulating factor (G-CSF) for severe congenital neutropenia
30 and, through his leadership role in the Severe Chronic Neutropenia International
31 Registry, influential investigations of the molecular basis of congenital neutropenia
32 and the risks of myelodysplasia and myeloid leukemia in G-CSF-treated patients. His
33 scientific accomplishments led to many awards and leadership positions in major
34 academic societies including the Society for Pediatric Research (E. Mead Johnson
35 Award), American Society of Pediatric Hematology Oncology (ASPHO Distinguished
36 Career Award), American Society for Clinical Investigation, and, American Society of
37 Hematology (ASH), and American Pediatric Society.

38 Larry was also a gifted writer and editor, who served in many other editorial
39 positions, including associate editor for the *Journal of Clinical Investigation* and the
40 *American Journal of Hematology*; a member of the editorial boards of *Pediatric Blood
41 and Cancer*, *Current Opinion in Hematology*, *Hematotherapy and Stem Cell
42 Research*, *Pediatrics in Review*, and *American Journal of Hematology*; and member
43 or chair of the publications committees for ASPHO and ASH.

44 Although Larry did not follow an early inclination to be a rabbi, he became an
45 extraordinarily devoted teacher and mentor. In fact, during one of his final hospital
46 admissions, he interrupted a resident's history-taking to say, "Enough about me; tell

47 me about your research!” Junior faculty members and fellows who have trained or
48 established their early careers under Dr. Boxer’s mentorship now lead major
49 academic and pharmaceutical programs. Of all of the many accolades during his
50 career, none was more important to him than the individual relationships he had with
51 his colleagues and the countless individuals he mentored during his career. In
52 December, 2016, Larry was honored with the ASH Mentorship award,
53 acknowledging his accomplishments supporting the career development of others.
54 Despite ill health and against all medical advice, Larry traveled to San Diego to
55 receive this award as a coda to his career.

56 Our community has lost a giant in pediatric medicine, an exemplary mentor, and a
57 dear friend. Larry Boxer's influence and impact will not be forgotten and his deep
58 commitment to pediatric hematology and oncology will be felt for many years to
59 come.

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61 **CONFLICTS OF INTEREST: NONE**

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63 **FIGURE LEGEND:**

64 Figure 1. Larry Boxer, MD



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