

In Remembrance: G. Alan Marlatt

Barbara McCrady

PROFESSOR G. ALAN Marlatt passed away on March 14 from complications of melanoma. He was a long-time member of Research Society on Alcoholism (RSA), and was the 2004 recipient of the RSA Distinguished Researcher Award. Dr. Marlatt was born in Vancouver, British Columbia, and completed his undergraduate work at the University of British Columbia (UBC) where he earned first class honors in psychology. He completed his doctoral work in clinical psychology at Indiana University and his predoctoral internship at Napa State Hospital in Napa, California. He held positions as Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at UBC and Assistant and Associate Professor of Psychology at the University of Wisconsin before joining the faculty of the University of Washington in 1972. He was a Professor of Psychology and Director of the Addictive Behaviors Research Center at the University of Washington.

Dr. Marlatt was a leader whose innovative scientific and conceptual contributions changed how alcohol and drug use, prevention, and treatment are understood. In his early work, he developed an innovative research paradigm, the balanced placebo design, to discriminate pharmacological from psychological effects of alcohol. Using the Behavioral Alcohol Research Lab (BARLAB) experimental bar that he established at University of Washington, he also conducted seminal research on social factors influencing alcohol consumption.

His early experimental research led to his later more applied work. Dr. Marlatt's relapse prevention model dramatically changed the way the treatment community conceptualized relapse. The relapse prevention model described relapse as a process understandable in terms of known social learning principles, and led directly to a treatment model that acknowledged the reality of relapse in addictive behaviors, suggested specific interventions to prevent and manage relapses, and set out a series of testable hypotheses.

Over time, Dr. Marlatt focused increasingly on interventions to reduce harm from alcohol and drug use. He developed the BASICS program to address high-risk drinking among college students; results provided strong support for the efficacy of the program, which now has been adopted



widely on college campuses. He also spoke more broadly to a harm reduction approach to alcohol and drug use, arguing eloquently for compassionate approaches that would help to protect people's health and safety, even if they continued to use.

Throughout his career, Dr. Marlatt was an innovator, always looking for better scientific methods to study basic cognitive, affective, and behavioral processes in the addictions; and always looking for compassionate and effective ways to help people affected by alcohol and drug use. His scientific and clinical acumen were matched by his warmth, charisma, and talent for metaphor that made his ideas and science accessible and understandable to a broad audience.

In addition to his intellectual leadership, Dr. Marlatt provided support and guidance to many scientists in the field of addictions research. He stood up for what he believed was right, and strongly and publicly supported colleagues whose integrity was challenged by persons who disagreed with their beliefs. He was a mentor to scores of young scientists who now are scientific leaders in addictions research. And, he was a warm and engaged colleague, always inclusive and interested in others in the field, both as professionals and as people.

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Dr. Marlatt's accomplishments were recognized by a dozen professional awards, including the 2009 Distinguished Scientific Contributions to Clinical Psychology Award from the American Psychological Association, the 2004 Harriet Tubman Freedom Award for Outstanding Community Activism, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Innovators Combating Substance Abuse Award. He received extensive grant funding from the NIH, and held a MERIT award from NIAAA from 1990 to 1999. With his colleagues, he wrote or edited 23 books, published more than 300 scientific papers and book chapters, and gave invited addresses around the world.

He leaves behind his wife Kathryn Moore, his son Christopher Alan (Kit) Marlatt and his daughter-in-law Ashley Rachel Marlatt, his half-brother Robert Whitehead, his step-daughters Melanie and Charlotte Miller and Lara Coltrim, his step-son Colin Maclay, step-granddaughters Amanda and Seraphina White, and his grandson Aidan-Jack Marlatt. He also leaves behind hundreds of colleagues and friends who loved him and a field that has been made infinitely richer for his contributions and his presence.