



IN MEMORIAM

Larry S. Benardo, MD, PhD 1956–2004

Larry Benardo died in New York on December 28, 2004 of complications related to a rare malignant spinal cord tumor. At the time of his death, Larry was professor of neurology, physiology, and pharmacology at SUNY-Downstate in Brooklyn. He also served as vice-chairman of the Department of Neurology and Director of the Division of Clinical Neurophysiology and Epilepsy.

Larry began his career in neuroscience as an undergraduate at the University of California, Irvine in the laboratory of Carl Cotman, studying the influence of injury on hippocampal plasticity. He then moved to Stanford University where he was a graduate student with David Prince. In Prince's lab, he was responsible for some of the early intracellular microelectrode studies characterizing the actions of neurotransmitters, including acetylcholine, on neurons in the *in vitro* hippocampal slice. In addition, he participated in studies with Barry Connors in the Prince lab, demonstrating dye coupling between neurons in the neocortex. While these studies were initially greeted cautiously, they presaged the current recognition of gap junction electrical synapses as mediators of synchronization among neocortical interneurons. After receiving his Ph.D., Larry entered medical school at Columbia P&S, where he was awarded the Helen M. Sciarra Prize in Neurology. He was a resident at the Neurological Institute of New York from 1986–1989 and, subsequently, served as a postdoctoral research fellow with Dr.

Robert K.S. Wong, then at Columbia. When Bob Wong moved to SUNY-Downstate as Chairman of Pharmacology, he persuaded Larry to join him as assistant professor of neurology and pharmacology. Larry's research at Downstate mainly concerned GABA-mediated synaptic inhibition in the neocortex. Among many results was the observation that distinct classes of neocortical interneurons mediate fast (GABA_A) and slow (GABA_B) inhibitory neurotransmission. Larry became a tenured, full professor in 2000. Larry was active clinically in the Department of Neurology and he played a large role in the establishment of the Clinical Neurosciences Center at SUNY Downstate, a comprehensive facility for the treatment of neurological disorders. At the same time, Larry's laboratory has received consistent support from the NIH, and he served as a member of the Integrative, Functional, and Cognitive Neuroscience study section. In recent years, Larry developed an interest in post-traumatic epilepsy, after discovering that ablation of superficial cortical inhibition leads to epileptogenesis. This laboratory research led to clinical studies in head trauma patients. Larry was active in the Society for Neuroscience, the American Epilepsy Society, and the American Academy of Neurology and was elected to the American Neurological Association in 2001. Larry was a member of the first group of editors of *Epilepsy Currents* and was among the journal's most active and prolific contributors. His easy-going temperament encouraged the journal to call upon him more often than was probably fair. Larry's dedication to this periodical is acknowledged with abiding gratitude.

by Michael A. Rogawski, Robert L. Macdonald,
and Timothy A. Pedley