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David C. Beebe, 1944-2015, In Memoriam

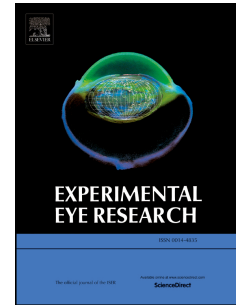
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David C. Beebe, 1944-2015, In Memoriam
Joram Piatigorsky, Steven Bassnett, John McAvoy and Suraj Bhat*

David C. Beebe, Ph.D., the Janet and Bernard Becker Professor of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences at Washington University, passed away from complications of ALS at his home in St. Louis on Friday, March 27, 2015. He was 70.

We have known David as a friend, as a colleague and as a vision scientist. On meeting Dave for the first time people were invariably struck by his intelligence, easy manner, and wide ranging interests. He was a devoted and award-winning scientist, a clear and inspiring lecturer, a head of department (Chair of Anatomy and Cell Biology at Uniformed Services University in Bethesda), an editor-in-chief (of Investigative Ophthalmology and Visual Science), and a beloved husband, father and grandfather.

David grew up on Long Island, NY. He graduated with a bachelor's degree from the University of Rhode Island, a master's degree in biomedical sciences from Brown University, and a doctorate in Biology from the University of Virginia. In 1974, he joined the Laboratory of Molecular Genetics at the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, Bethesda, MD.

Dave came into the lens field with a strong background in cell and developmental biology. Through his early work in the 1980's, mostly with chick lens epithelial explants, he identified key processes in lens development, particularly in fiber cell differentiation, and did much to identify factors involved in their regulation. Already as a postdoc and shortly thereafter, he dissociated delta-crystallin synthesis from lens cell elongation, and showed that specialization of delta-crystallin synthesis in the chicken lens depended on the overall balance of proteins synthesized, not simply the number of delta-crystallin messenger RNAs. He demonstrated that lens cell elongation was not strictly dependent on microtubules, as previously thought, but instead controlled by volume regulation, and provided evidence that ion efflux was a critical factor. He performed experiments relating lens growth and differentiation to specializations in the lens capsule, and wrote elegant papers considering lens differentiation in terms of regulation of cell division, cell elongation, cell volume, intracellular pH, and specific gene expression.

In addition to his own pioneering studies, Dave was instrumental in bringing cell biology to the fore in a field that, at that time, was still largely the domain of the biochemists. There is no doubt that he attracted many promising young cell and developmental biologists to enter the field, in the process elevating lens research to new heights. Motivating and mentoring young scientists was something Dave did brilliantly throughout his long career. It is pleasing to note that this important aspect of his life's work was formally recognized by his colleagues at Washington University who, in 2014, presented him with its Distinguished Educator award.

Dave was also passionate about promoting '*good science*' whenever the opportunity arose. He was uncommonly good at contributing to discussions at scientific conferences. Invariably, Dave's input would bring clarity to the discussion. One was never left in any doubt that there was an exceptional intellect at work. This, coupled with his insatiable curiosity, contributed

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