

SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University Office of Communications & Marketing

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A MESSAGE ABOUT THE PASSING OF DR. ALAN GINTZLER

On behalf of the College of Medicine and the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, it is with sadness that we announce the passing of **Alan Gintzler, Ph.D.** He passed away on March 19 following a battle with cancer for the last year and a half.

Dr. Gintzler earned his Ph.D. in Pharmacology from NYU Medical Center in 1974 and was a postdoctoral fellow at the Roche Institute for Molecular Biology from 1974 to 1976. He joined the faculty at Downstate in 1980 as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Biochemistry after being on the faculty at Columbia University. He became a full professor in 1990 and served as Department of Biochemistry Chair, with a joint appointment in Psychiatry, from 2006-2009 when the department dissolved. He was a member of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology since 2009.



At the time of his death, Dr. Gintzler held a SUNY Distinguished Professor position in the Department of OB-GYN at Downstate and served as a Board member of the Research Foundation for The State University of New York. He was the Chair of the Nominating Committee for the previous two years and served on the Audit & Finance and Executive Committees for nine years.

In addition to his Research Foundation role, Dr. Gintzler's academic status reflected highly profiled citation classics, editorial board appointments, and memberships on major NIH study sections. He was also a Principal Investigator on numerous NIH grants at Downstate for more than three decades. He authored more than 100 publications—his most recent in February 2021—in the Journal, *Translational Research* (Alan Gintzler and Nai-Jiang Liu, *Translational Research*, 2021; <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.trsl.2021.02.002>). In 2017, Dr. Gintzler also achieved SUNY Distinguished Faculty rank among his many significant accomplishments.

Dr. Gintzler's studies stand out in their depth and breadth. As a leading pain and addiction expert and researcher investigating narcotic tolerance and sex differences in pain and analgesic mechanisms, his research provided the foundation for multiple areas of novel therapeutic discovery to develop highly effective agents for treating intractable pain in women.

Dr. Gintzler's scientific masterpiece was an incredibly detailed and well-supported description of a signaling mechanism that is as complex as it is beautiful. He showed how two different opioid receptors (mu and kappa), two different metabotropic receptors for the neurotransmitter glutamate, and a receptor for the hormone estrogen combine in two different oligomeric configurations to explain pain relief or the absence of pain relief and how the switching occurs. This oligomeric complex even contains an enzyme allowing the complex to make its own estrogen locally instead of taking it out of the bloodstream.

Dr. Gintzler was a remarkable scientist and significant partner of the School of Graduate Studies (SGS). **Dean Mark Stewart, Ph.D.**, remembers him as an outstanding scientist and researcher whose central line of research focused on the mechanisms that "turn on" and "turn off" intrinsic pain relief in the spinal cord. In honor of Dr. Gintzler's commitment to SGS, the highest prize for Annual Research Day will now be called the ***Alan R. Gintzler Prize for Best Presentation.***

An equally remarkable mentor, he cared deeply about teaching and raising the next generation of scientists. As a conscientious and driven teacher, he led by example, undertaking the mentorship of graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and residents. He had oversight of an innovative NIH-funded training program focused on women's health—the Building Interdisciplinary Research Careers in Women's Health (BIRCWH) Program—with **Drs. John and Judie LaRosa**, and several other faculty mentors.

SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University joins with Dr. Gintzler's family in mourning the loss of an exceptional researcher, teacher, valued colleague, and friend to many.

Respectfully,

F. Charles Brunicardi, M.D.
Dean, College of Medicine

Camille A. Clare, M.D., MPH, CPE, FACOG
Chair, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology