

Roy Altman



I met Roy Altman many years ago and had the opportunity to spend a few months working in his laboratory in the basement of the Veterans Hospital in Miami. The day after my arrival at 6:30 in the morning we were already at work. Roy took a text on animal models of osteoarthritis from his library and handed it to me: 'Read it, we'll start tomorrow'. From that day on, working with him was an exciting experience. Soon, under his expert guidance, we began operating the rabbits by performing a medial meniscectomy which rapidly induced osteoarthritis of the knee. Then the microscopic and biochemical investigations on cartilage, using absolutely innovative methods for those times. For the first time I worked on the dosage of metalloproteases and related tissue inhibitors: I was in the new world! In the dilated times of the laboratory, I was able to go up to the upper floors to follow Roy in his clinical activities and I discovered an extremely competent doctor who also knew how to give a smile. The medical profession is largely learned by following an older colleague and inevitably something sticks with it; not only skills are transmitted but also attitudes and methods of approaching the sick. So, the kindness in being a doctor and the ability to listen that are taught today at the University, perhaps not yet enough, I learned from Roy and made them my own.

His career has been dazzling. Born in Astoria, New York, Roy grew up in Miami where he graduated in Medicine, attended postgraduate internships and, after two years of military service as a Lieutenant in

the US Navy, won a rheumatology fellowship sponsored by the National Institute of Health under the guidance of David Howell. A rapid academic career followed, and Roy became Professor of Medicine at the University of Miami, Director of the Division of Rheumatology and Immunology and of the Rheumatological and Geriatric Research Unit of Miami Veterans Hospital. After his retirement from the University of Miami in 2003, Roy moved with his wife Linda to California where he continued his clinical and research activity at the Division of Rheumatology and Immunology of the University of California Los Angeles until his death.

During his academic career Roy has made a decisive contribution to the literature on osteoarthritis, to the understanding of the mechanisms of degradation of articular cartilage through studies on animal models. The classification criteria of knee, hand and hip osteoarthritis used in clinical studies over the last 30 years bear his name. He was one of the founders of the Osteoarthritis Research Society International (OARSI) of which he was President from 1994 to 1996 and Chairman Standing Committee on Clinical Trials in Osteoarthritis from 1996 to 2005. His editorial activity for *Seminars in Arthritis and Rheumatism* was tireless.

With Roy I lost a friend and a mentor. I will miss the long chats where he knew how to listen and advise. I will miss the email exchanges talking about this and that and difficult cases. I will miss your kindness.

Thanks Roy!

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