



In Memoriam

Dr. Charles H. Turner

1961-2010

It is with great sadness that we report that Dr. Charles H. Turner lost his fight with cancer on July 16, 2010. This is both a personal and a professional loss to many of us. Charles was not only a valued colleague, but a personal friend of 20 years. I helped to recruit Charles as the Director of Orthopaedic Research in the Dept of Orthopaedic Surgery in 1991. At that time, we had established an interdisciplinary Biomechanics and Biomaterials Research Center involving groups from the Schools of Medicine, Dentistry, Science and Engineering. It was largely through Charles' vision that this research center ultimately developed into the Biomedical Engineering Program that exists today. It was Charles' idea that the research center could be more, and could provide not just a research consortium but training to graduate, and eventually undergraduate, students.

Charles was a scientist of international standing who was greatly respected throughout the world for his work in mechanical adaptation of bone, mechanotransduction, and the skeletal effects of genetic modification in animal models, and who made fundamental discoveries in each of these areas. He was remarkable in that he knew something about almost everything. He was not only one of the best and most accomplished bioengineers in the field of skeletal biology, but he was also a better biologist than many of us who were trained in biology. I have known two types of scientists in my career – those who think new thoughts and can synthesize seemingly unrelated pieces of information, and those who can test those ideas experimentally, but may never think of them. Charles was one of the few who could do both. This creative and practical genius allowed him to develop truly new approaches to problems, and his expertise as an experimentalist allowed him to devise creative experiments to test them. This combination of talents moved the science forward more rapidly than it otherwise would have. Because

of this, even in a shortened career, he was the author of more than 250 papers published in the peer-reviewed literature, and more than 100 invited presentations delivered across the world. During his distinguished career, he received many awards, including the highly coveted Fuller Albright Award from the American Society for Bone and Mineral Research. He also was the recipient of Outstanding Young Investigator Awards from the Whitaker Foundation and the Health Future Foundation. He was elected a Fellow of the American Institute of Medical and Biological Engineers in 2002, and was awarded the Abraham M. Max Distinguished Professor Award in 2006 from the Purdue School of Engineering and Technology.

Charles was never out for personal recognition, but was the consummate scientist, driven to search for answers to questions that intrigued him. He imparted this quality to his students as well. He was dedicated to the training of young engineers, physicians and biomedical scientists at all levels. Many of these individuals were awarded prestigious young investigator awards while under his tutelage and have since gone on to successful careers in academia and industry.

Charles was born November 29, 1961 in Roswell, NM, was a Chancellor's Professor and Associate Director within the Department of Biomedical Engineering (Purdue) on the Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) campus, and held a joint appointment within the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery (IU School of Medicine) where he was Director of Orthopaedic Research. He received his B.S. in Mechanical Engineering from Texas Tech University in 1983 and Ph.D. degree in Biomedical Engineering from Tulane University in 1987. He joined the faculty on the IUPUI campus in 1991 after four years with the Osteoporosis Research Center at Creighton University.

Charles is survived by his two children, Jeff and Emily, as well as his parents, two brothers and a sister. In his memory, the University has set up the Charles H. Turner Young Investigator Bone Research Award, which will be presented annually to a pre- or post-doctoral student on the IUPUI campus who will present their bone-related research at an annual meeting. Donations can be made out to Indiana University Foundation-Charles H. Turner Young Investigator Bone Research Award and sent to Indiana University Foundation, P.O. Box 660245, Indianapolis, IN 46266-0245.

David B Burr