Judah Folkman, MD (1933–2008)

The Editors and Staff of Clinical Cancer Research join with the entire cancer research community in mourning the loss of one of the brightest stars in our universe, Judah Folkman. Dr. Folkman was a long-time member and valued friend of the American Association for Cancer Research and a frequent contributor to AACR journals. His most recent contribution appears in this issue (Lee T-Y, Tjin Tham Sjin RM, Movahedi S, Ahmed B, Pravda EA, Lo K-M, Gillies SD, Folkman J, Javaherian K. Linking antibody Fc domain to endostatin significantly improves endostatin half-life and efficacy. Clin Cancer Res 2008;14:1487–93).

Known for his creativity, Dr. Folkman was often called the father of angiogenesis therapy. His seminal paper in The New England Journal of Medicine in 1971 proposed the hypothesis that all tumor growth is angiogenesis-dependent, opening a field of investigation that many scientists pursue today. Used also in treating many non-neoplastic diseases, angiogenesis inhibitors have played a pivotal role in relegating some cancers to the status of chronic disease. Dr. Folkman’s research has brought hope to more than 1.2 million patients worldwide who now receive antiangiogenic therapy, and it has contributed to the development of 10 cancer drugs currently in use. Dozens more drugs are in development, and at least 50 other angiogenesis inhibitors are in clinical trials around the world.

To his patients, students, and colleagues Dr. Folkman was a constant, compassionate presence. He had a profound influence on generations of Harvard-trained physicians, who labor today throughout the world to advance his work and cultivate the fertile fields he planted. He was also an outstanding lecturer and teacher and was an inspiration to all those who had the pleasure of hearing him speak.

Dr. Folkman was a graduate of Harvard Medical School. At the time of his death, he was the Andrus Professor of Pediatric Surgery and Director of the Vascular Biology Program at Children’s Hospital in Boston and Professor of Cell Biology at Harvard Medical School. He was a member of the National Academy of Sciences, the American Academy of Arts & Sciences, the American Philosophical Society, and the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences.

We extend our condolences to his family, to his colleagues at Children’s Hospital Boston and Harvard Medical School, and to his many friends. We also celebrate his life and the impact he has had on patients and scientists throughout the world for generations to come.

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