Series on Chromatin Dynamics

Dedication to Alan Wolffe

Photo courtesy of Dr. Gustav Klobeck

Alan Wolffe's untimely death at a conference last spring came as a shock to those in the chromatin world and beyond. The loss of this dynamic researcher, prolific writer and lively role model has been widely felt among members of the molecular biology community over the months since his death.

A simple Medline search is enough to illustrate Alan's contribution to the chromatin field. His publications range in the hundreds, and include many reviews and two books. To us at *EMBO reports*, the impact of Alan's work is also evident from the literature we had commissioned prior to his death. The last time I had contacted Alan for advice on another matter, in addition to providing helpful input, he had also volunteered to write a review on his latest scientific interest, the use of designed transcription factors as tools in medicine and in basic research. It was to be co-authored by some of his colleagues at his newly established laboratory at Sangamo Biosciences, including Fyodor Urnov who had been one of his last post-docs at the NIH. On a second front, we had asked several members of the chromatin community to contribute to a review series on chromatin dynamics. One of these was Alan's first post-doc, Geneviève Almouzni, who, together with Catherine Green, has written an article that appears in this issue. Other authors contributing to this series include Peter Becker, who first got to know Alan when he joined Carl Wu's laboratory at the NIH. There, Carl encouraged Peter to seek advice from Alan and Geneviève, whose input helped him to get his new projects off the ground.

Given the above network of connections, and our gratitude to Alan for his support of both *The EMBO Journal* and *EMBO reports*, we thought it appropriate to dedicate this review series to him, and to extend it to include the review that we had initially commissioned from his group. Pier Paolo Pandolfi, from the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, has also contributed to the latter review to honor Alan's memory.

Thus, in the next few months, we will feature articles covering the following of aspects chromatin dynamics:

- *When repair meets chromatin* by Catherine M. Green & Geneviève Almouzni (this issue)
- *Histone acetylation: a switch between repressive and permissive chromatin* by Anton Eberharder & Peter Becker
- *Designed transcription factors as structural, functional and therapeutic probes of chromatin in vivo* by Edward J. Rebar, Andreas Reik, Fyodor D. Urnov & Pier Paolo Pandolfi
- *Mechanisms for regulated chromatin remodeling enzymes* by Craig Peterson

Christine Blaumueller, Reviews Editor

Quotes from some of the authors:

'Alan was a most successful advocate of all aspects of chromatin research. His endless series of reviews helped to increase the awareness of the importance of epigenetic regulation among those concerned with gene expression, not least the editors of general interest journals. His encyclopedic memory allowed him to condense facts from various corners of the field into coherent, *Reader's Digest*-type reviews that brought everybody up to date. Because Alan was highly social, communicative and interactive, many researchers in the chromatin world had a special relationship with him. As a source of inspiration and support or as a tough competitor in one of the many areas he was interested in, Alan Wolffe was a point of reference for many of us.'

Peter Becker

'I once asked Alan to autograph a copy of *Chromatin Structure and Function* as a graduation present for a former student of mine. Alan obliged, inscribing a quote from Albert von Szent-Gyorgy: "Discovery consists of seeing what everybody has seen and thinking what nobody has thought." These words poignantly describe Alan's own role in the rise of the nucleosome from relative obscurity in the 1970s and 80s to dominating scholarship in genome biology.'

Fyodor D. Urnov

'One of Alan's favourite quotations was "Nature never decided to be interesting, yet we scientists find it fascinating!" He has greatly contributed to us finding chromatin a very interesting aspect of nature.'

Geneviève Almouzni

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