Samuel Baron (1928–2015)

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WITH THE TRAGIC, EARLY DEATH of Alick Isaacs in 1966, there was no doubt in the minds of the small group of investigators studying interferon at the time that Sam Baron had succeeded to leadership in the field of interferon research. Sam had spent a year at Mill Hill in London working in Isaacs's group in 1960–1961, and had subsequently returned to a position at NIH. His lab was studying the biology of interferon and its role in the recovery of animals from viral infections. He acted in the late 1960s as a one-person clearinghouse for research in interferon, often called on by other investigators for advice on methodology in the field, and participating in and helping to plan the few meetings then taking place on interferon. In the late 1960s Sam put together the Interferon Scientific Memoranda, a precursor to an Internet exchange scheme, in which articles in press, abstracts, and ideas in interferon research were printed and mailed by NIH to interested scientists all over the world. This greatly facilitated exchange of information in a budding field of research.

Sam was a New York City boy, born in the Bronx and educated in the city school system. He received his BA and MD degrees from New York University in 1948 and 1953, respectively. He was remembered by the microbiology faculty at NYU Medical School long after his graduation for the enthusiasm he had demonstrated for ongoing research in infectious diseases in that department. Following a year as an intern at Montefiore Hospital in New York, he started his career in research in microbiology and immunology as a postdoctoral research fellow at the School of Public Health at the University of Michigan, then a fountainhead of research in virology. In 1955 he took a position at the NIH in the Division of Biological Standards, a precursor to the FDA branch at NIH. In addition to helping with development of vaccines, he started his research on antimicrobial mechanisms. This was what led him to spend his sabbatical year at Mill Hill in Isaacs's lab.

On his return to the NIH, Sam moved his research to the Laboratory of Viral Diseases in the NIAID. In that position he continued making significant contributions to the study of interferons. These included identifying interferons as important antiviral substances, and the first description of circulating interferon in viremia. Several visiting scientists, who were later to make significant contributions to research in infectious diseases, such as Fernando Dianzani and

Alfons Billiau, spent sabbaticals in the Baron lab at the NIAID. By the 1970s, outstanding research on interferons was underway at other labs at NIH, in medical schools, and the pharmaceutical industry.

In 1975, after 20 years at NIH, Sam assumed the position of chairman of the Microbiology Department at the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston. He later became the director of its Immunology Program and associate dean for Research Development and Planning. Throughout his career at Galveston, Sam continued his laboratory research. While department chairman, he edited a textbook of medical microbiology and several books on interferons. He stepped down as chairman in 1997, but his research output was undiminished. Sam continued his research in his own laboratory, as well as a volunteer scientist at the Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research (2002–2003), Center for Cancer Research (2003–2004), and the NIAID (2004–2015) in the Cytokine Biology Section. He studied the effects of the combination of monocytes and type 1 and 2 interferons on a number of tumor cells *in vitro* and *in vivo*. The lab is continuing this work with the hope of starting clinical trials in ovarian cancer patients in the next year.

In 2007, Sam retired from the department and became a professor of microbiology, emeritus. The department chairmanship was named in his honor.

Sam was a fine mentor, always challenging the intellect of his colleagues, students, friends, and family members. He was a visionary who asked the most important big-picture questions; an intellectual giant; a loving husband and best friend to his wife, Phyllis Goodman Baron, for 60 years; a great father to his 5 children, Steven, Clifton, Jeffrey, Jonathan, and Jody; and a grandfather to his 11 grandchildren and 1 great-grandchild. Sam passed away peacefully on June 22, 2015; he will be greatly missed but his pioneering and naturally inquisitive spirit remains, and his memory will continue to live through those who knew and loved him.

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