



Lawrence J. Seidman



Photograph courtesy of Carl Salzman, MD

Dr. Lawrence J. Seidman—affectionately called Larry—an eminent neuropsychologist, and beloved husband, father, grandfather, and brother, passed away suddenly on 7 September 2017. He was 67. He was due to give a lecture at an NIMH meeting in Washington DC that morning, and had been his usual active self, engaging in humorous conversation and showing pictures of his grandkids to his friends at the table. He suddenly felt ill, was taken to the hospital, and died about an hour later of a heart attack.

Larry was born in New York City, raised in a politically aware family, and always interested in progressive activities to help those who were needy and underprivileged. He was an outstanding student as well as an avid competitive tennis and basketball player; his love of playing and watching sports continued throughout his life. He completed his undergraduate studies in psychology at City College of New York (CCNY) in 1971, an institution in which he took great pride and where his interest

in psychology was kindled by a strong mentor. Following college, he worked at Odyssey House for drug rehabilitation and then spent a year working on an Israeli kibbutz. He received his doctorate in psychology from Boston University, planning to become a psychotherapist. At BU he met Dr. Alan Mirsky who became his mentor, close friend, and collaborator who inspired Larry's interest in neuropsychology leading to a lifelong academic career. In his PhD thesis, Larry began investigating temporal lobe epilepsy and its developmental roots. However, as a keen clinical observer, he noticed there was a substantial overlap with symptoms related to schizophrenia, which, at the time, was not considered a developmental brain disorder. This observation led to one of his early landmark papers in the 1983 *Psychological Bulletin* positing schizophrenia as a neurodevelopmental disorder. It was an integrative and theoretical review of the literature (1920-1982) on brain dysfunction in schizophrenia that had a wider impact on the fields of psychology and psychiatry beyond schizophrenia and demonstrated the key role that neuropsychological deficits play in many psychiatric disorders. This review also launched Larry into a lifelong career in understanding, treating and preventing schizophrenia and other psychoses.

Larry joined the faculty of Boston University Medical Center in 1980 and moved to the Harvard Medical School Department of Psychiatry at the Massachusetts Mental Health Center in 1985, where he remained for the rest of his career. He created a neuropsychology training program within the psychology department at MMHC that attracted an increasing number of enthusiastic fellows. In 2002, he was appointed the Director of the Center of Excellence for Clinical Neuroscience and Psychopharmacological Research at the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Department of Mental Health-Harvard Medical School Department of Psychiatry Research Center. In his role as leader of the Commonwealth Research Center, Larry's work was instrumental in the development of innovative clinical services for early course psychotic disorder patients, and for those at clinical high risk for these illnesses. He became a full Professor at HMS in 2004 and served as the Vice-Chair of Psychiatry at the Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center since 2005.

Over the course of three decades, Larry devoted himself to characterizing the cognitive impairments often seen in schizophrenia and their underlying neural circuitry. His painstaking work delineated the natural course of psychoses, its neural circuitry and the predictive value of ascertaining these deficits for early detection and intervention. In 2012 he published an important and highly cited paper in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* on the dysfunction of the default network in schizophrenia which shed light on the circuitry underlying psychosis and other neurodevelopmental disorders such as ADHD. These pioneering discoveries have helped countless patients and clinicians learn how to detect these serious illnesses and to intervene early by demonstrating the importance of early intervention to attenuate the impact of psychosis across the lifespan. Data from two large controlled studies in particular suggested that performance of tests of memory in early adolescence may predict conversion from the prodrome period of schizophrenia to overt psychosis, and potentially, to chronic features of the illnesses. Just before his untimely death Larry was in the process of completing a *magnum opus* paper on the neuropsychology of schizophrenia in collaboration with Dr. Mirsky.

Larry's research and leadership in schizophrenia was at the national and international levels. He served on several NIMH committees and at the time of his death he was the local chairperson of the upcoming *International Early Psychosis Association* meeting in Boston. His leadership contributions earned him close friendships with many like-minded scholars throughout the world and many national and international laurels, including a Community Service Award by the *International Schizophrenia Research Society* in 2016. He was also a member of the *American College of Neuropsychopharmacology* (ACNP) and published over 400 papers, many in high impact journals. His work has been cited over 32,000 times. He was named by Thompson Reuters *Science Watch* as one of the 'The World's Most Influential Scientific Minds' in 2013 and 2016. Weeks before his death, the Harvard Medical School awarded him the prestigious William Silen Lifetime Achievement Award for exceptional mentorship.

Along with his acclaimed research and teaching career, Larry never lost his interest in clinical therapeutic work and he continued to treat patients throughout his academic career. He was an astute clinician, with over 30 years of experience as a clinical psychotherapist and as a consultant and neuropsychologist. His patients consistently remember him as the one doctor who always made them feel like someone of significance. Larry's interest in understanding and helping those afflicted with schizophrenia also arose from his clinical work. He developed a 35- year therapeutic relationship with a young inpatient at BU who was suffering from schizophrenia. The two became very close over the years and this young man inspired Larry's research in work in cognitive deficits, which are a core aspect of schizophrenia

For all his world renown, Larry treated everyone he encountered with dignity—his patients, mentees, colleagues, and collaborators. He was a generous and empathic man, with a disarming smile, and an open door to anyone who needed help or advice. He was a highly sought-after teacher and mentor and scores of scientists and clinicians around the world owe their accomplishments to his tutelage. Many of his mentees are leading scientists, professors, or department heads.

Larry will be remembered for having embraced every aspect of his life with the same zeal, whether it was talking about his children and beaming with pride over his grandchildren, playing tennis and basketball, cheering on the Celtics and Red Sox with his friends, discussing Bob Dylan, relishing a double espresso, or plumbing the deepest secrets of the mind. He was so unpretentious that many of his friends had no idea about his numerous accomplishments until his funeral service. Despite being so busy, one often saw him rolling up his sleeves to help, whether it was moving boxes to make space for a new trainee or sitting down with a mentee with an excel spreadsheet to figure out what the latest data showed. Above all, he was an extraordinarily kind, generous man with a big heart. He was passionate about all aspects of his life and lived it fully.

Larry is survived by Ilene, his wife of 46 years, son Josh, daughter Sarah and his brother Ben. Before his death, Larry was blessed to meet his first grandson and first granddaughter. He will be missed enormously by his family, his friends, his colleagues, and members of the entire scientific field of schizophrenia.

Respectfully submitted,

Carl Salzman MD, *chairperson*

Jill M. Goldstein, PhD

Alan I. Green, MD

Matcheri S. Keshavan, MD

Martha E. Shenton, PhD

William S. Stone, PhD