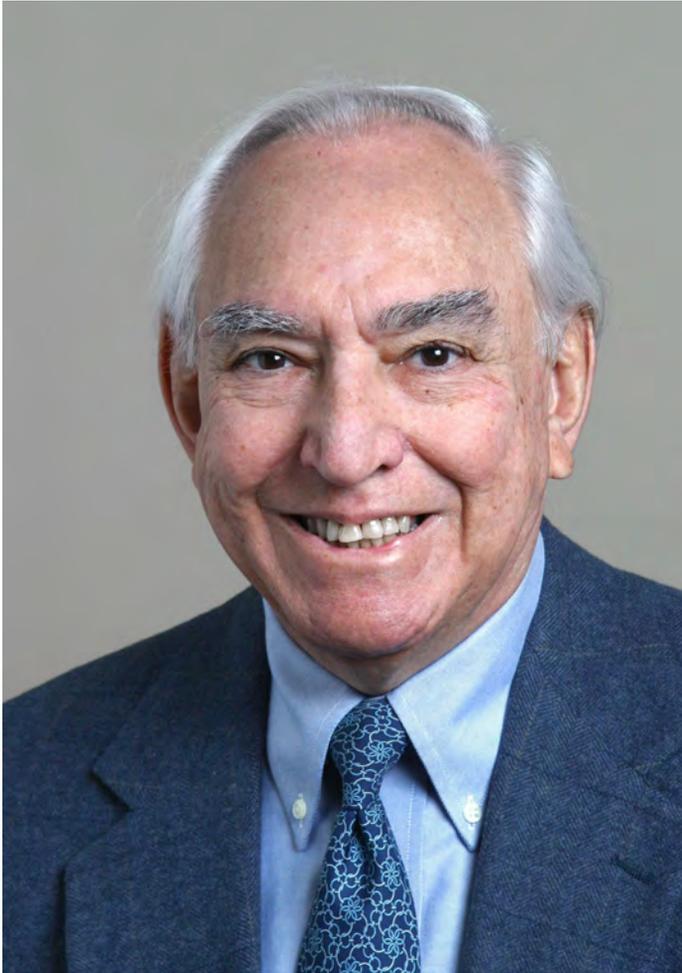




Jack H. Mendelson



Jack H. Mendelson, M.D., Professor of Psychiatry (Neuroscience) at Harvard Medical School and Co-Director of the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Research Center at McLean Hospital died on August 15, 2007, after a brief illness; he was 77 years old. Jack devoted his research career to clinical, behavioral, and biological studies of alcoholism and drug abuse. He was a true titan of the field. After undergraduate training at the Johns Hopkins University, Jack received his medical degree from the University of Maryland, then did an internship at Boston City Hospital and a psychiatry residency at Massachusetts General Hospital. He was the first Chief of the National Center for Prevention and Control of Alcoholism at the National Institutes of Health, then Chief of Psychiatry at Boston City Hospital, Professor of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, and founder and co-director (with his colleague and beloved wife, Nancy Mello, Ph.D.) of the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Research Center at McLean Hospital. He made nearly 500 contributions to the scientific literature. In his case, quantity was matched by quality; he published papers in *Science*, *Nature*, and the *New England Journal of Medicine*, and won numerous awards, among them the Founders Award of the American

Academy of Addiction Psychiatry, the Hofheimer Prize of the American Psychiatric Association, and, with Nancy Mello, the Jellinek Memorial Award for Research on Alcoholism, the Distinguished Research Award of the Research Society on Alcoholism, and the Nathan B. Eddy Memorial Award for Innovative Research on Drug Abuse from the College on Problems of Drug Dependence. The McLean Hospital has established an annual research award for excellence in behavioral and biological research on substance abuse in Jack's honor. The National Institute for Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse of the NIH has established a memorial lectureship to honor Jack, which indicates the level of esteem in which he is held.

As a teacher, Jack was extremely skilled in making complex concepts understandable to students, trainees, and colleagues in psychiatry and other medical specialties. In so doing, he not only broadened their perspective on the clinical and scientific complexity of substance use disorders, but also placed

these disorders firmly within the scope of work of all practicing physicians. For postdoctoral students and young physicians with a more enduring interest in alcohol and drug abuse research, Jack was an enthusiastic mentor, generously sharing data, giving them an opportunity to write up their findings, reviewing their work with a critical scientific eye, and encouraging their efforts with unflagging optimism. Many went on to successful academic careers of their own, fortified by the solid grounding in research methodology and the untiring support they received as fellows and junior faculty members in the laboratories that, for almost four decades, have remained on the cutting edge of research in this field.

To appreciate the impact of Jack's work on the field of addiction research, it is useful to consider how alcoholism and addiction were viewed before Jack conducted his landmark studies. For example, alcoholism was grouped in the diagnostic nomenclature with personality disorders, and was seen as a symptom of some underlying deep-seated psychological problem rather than a disease in its own right. Jack's critical research, in which he observed alcoholics in the act of drinking, began to change all of that. He demonstrated through rigorous human laboratory studies that alcoholic drinking caused dysphoria and other psychiatric symptoms, and was not merely a result of other problems. He clearly demonstrated the degree of suffering that alcoholics experience, and sensitized the field to appreciate that. This led to the beginning of more integration of alcoholism and its treatment into mainstream medicine, as well as a more empathic rather than judgmental view of individuals with alcohol dependence.

Jack had a similar view of opioid dependence, and was involved in some of the groundbreaking work on the partial opioid agonist buprenorphine, demonstrating its potential therapeutic value in the treatment of heroin addiction. Twenty years later, buprenorphine was approved by the FDA for the treatment of opioid dependence, representing the first time that opioid agonist treatment could be prescribed by physicians as part of general medical practice. Jack was also involved in the early studies of the opioid antagonist naltrexone, which is an effective treatment both in the treatment of opioid dependence and alcohol dependence. These are just a few of the highlights of Jack's research career.

As impressive as the actual research discoveries that Jack Mendelson made was the way that he accomplished them. Jack realized that a multiplicity of factors influenced the development, clinical course, and response to treatment of substance abuse and dependence. He also recognized that greater scientific understanding was and still is an essential precursor to eradicating the stigma associated with these disorders and for developing effective, evidence-based treatment approaches. Along with several generations of scientific colleagues and students, Jack brought innovation and scientific rigor to a study of the problems of substance use and dependence. His work shed light on the complex interplay between brain mechanisms and behavior in the development of these clinically complex problems. He and Nancy were among the first to explore the role of neuroendocrine factors in the development of substance dependence. Key to his success was an appreciation of the need to approach this complex set of disorders from a variety of perspectives, and he encouraged innovative scientists in a variety of fields to join his efforts. Thus, the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Research Center has over the years included psychiatrists, psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists, pharmacologists, chemists, biochemists, radiologists, obstetricians, and endocrinologists. By including scientists from a wide variety of theoretical perspectives, Jack was able to achieve exciting discoveries and help elucidate the nature of this group of disorders.

It is common, when describing someone who has passed on, to say that he loved life. But Jack Mendelson really loved life, and it showed. His devotion to Nancy, his children, and grandchildren,

was obvious, and he loved to have fun. He traveled frequently, often to exotic locations. He loved giving hotel and restaurant recommendations, and he was never wrong about these. He was an avid photographer, gardener, and cook. Jack enjoyed entertaining his staff at his and Nancy's home in Rockport. They even provided buckets and shovels for the young children who would come to their annual summer parties – a very thoughtful touch.

No tribute to Jack, however, would be complete without mentioning his jokes. Jack had an endless store of wonderful stories and an even larger collection of jokes. Many of his jokes were brilliant, and many were, as he would admit, awful, usually based on bad puns that would elicit simultaneous groans and laughter. But the pleasure was less about the jokes than about the joke-telling, and Jack appeared to enjoy telling the bad jokes as much (or more) than the good ones. There was a rhythm to the joke-telling; as the punch line approached, he would often lean forward a bit and speak a little more softly, as if the listeners were about to be let in on an important secret. Then the punchline was delivered with a twinkle in his eye. That was classic Jack Mendelson. He was indeed both a titan and a mensch. We will miss him.

Submitted by,

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