



# IN MEMORIAM

# DR. LARRY YOUNG

## 1967-2024

In late March 2024, the scientific community got the gut-wrenching news of the unexpected passing of Dr. Larry J. Young, William P. Timmie Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Emory School of Medicine, a mere few hours before he was to kick off the 2024 meeting of the Society for Social Neuroscience (S4SN) in Tsukuba, Japan. With his passing, the meeting now afforded an immediate opportunity to mourn, process, and reminisce, but also to inspire, synthesize, and galvanize the scientific community to achieve a grander scientific vision -- one that Larry would certainly have shared. Larry was a key member of a number of scientific societies such as the S4SN, the Society for Behavioral Neuroendocrinology and a frequent participant in the WCNH. Larry's research has contributed significantly to our understanding of the role of oxytocin and vasopressin on in the regulation of social behavior and he was a member of the organizing committee of this year's WCNH meeting in Atlanta.

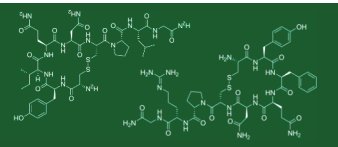
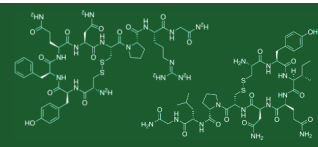


Comparative research has been the hallmark of Larry's career. He graduated from University of Georgia in 1989 with a degree in Biochemistry, one of the first in his family from a rural town in the south of Georgia to attend college. Larry was accepted into the graduate program at the University of Texas and worked with Dr. David Crews. After receiving a PhD in Neuroendocrinology in 1994, he switched to studying genes, brain, and behavior in mammals. Although he bid poikilotherms farewell, the combination of cutting-edge research and fun assimilated in the Crews lab and his laser focus on the benefits of studying non-traditional species had become firmly engrained in Larry's scientific psyche.

Larry did his one and only postdoctoral fellowship at Emory University in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, working with Dr. Thomas Insel. Tom brought with him a prairie vole model developed by the early pioneering work by Dr. Sue Carter. At Emory, Larry worked closely with Dr. Zuoxin Wang and Dr. Jim Winslow on conducting comparative studies with multiple vole species (*Microtus ochrogaster*, *M. montanus*, *M. pennsylvanicus*) as well as monogamous marmoset and non-monogamous macaques. Larry was awarded the Frank Beach Award in 1997 for his foundational work on driving molecular approaches to understanding complex social behaviors in naturally occurring species -- being only the second awardee since the founding of the SBN and one of the youngest ever.

In 1996, Larry received his first solo PI grant from NIH, a First Award (R29), and was subsequently appointed as Assistant Professor at Emory. He was only 29 years old, but had the maturity of vision, work ethic, research skills, collaborative spirit, and leadership to rapidly establish his own lab and run with it. In 1999, Larry took on his first three PhD students: Heather Patisaul, Miranda Lim, and Elizabeth Hammock. By the time these first three students defended, his lab was publishing in top tier journals, including *Nature*, *Science*, *Neuron*, and *Journal of Neuroscience*. His PhD students pioneered cutting edge molecular techniques in prairie and meadow voles. By 2005, his lab was exploding at the seams, with a total of six PhD students, two Masters students, and two post-doctoral fellows, Steven Phelps and Darlene Francis. Word was spreading that Larry's brand of science was hot, and Larry himself was proving to be a more than capable mentor whose trainees routinely published rigorous and broad reaching findings.

Larry was a superb mentor. Over his 25+ years as a PI, Larry led an outstanding group of 26 graduate students and 17 postdocs through their journeys of scientific discovery. Larry's trainees are located all over the world, and many have made and are making their own substantial contributions to the field and continue to collaborate scientifically with each other. His trainees all appreciated that Larry was not





only a smart, quick-witted scientist and brilliant experimentalist, but was also a gifted writer, speaker, storyteller, and kindly father figure. Larry's human side is what will be missed most. His down-to-earth demeanor, humility, and gentle awkwardness, as well as lightheartedness and sense of humor, made science approachable and fun. Larry was famous in the lab for his laughing at his own jokes – for those who knew him, his laugh often took the form of snorts and giggles, which were highly infectious. Larry had continuous NIH funding from NIMH for his entire career, and support expanded to include a diversified portfolio that belied the transdisciplinary nature of his works. His belief in team science led to his creation of THREE major research centers in his short career: the Center for Translational Social Neuroscience, the Conti Center, and the Center for Social Neural Networks. He was instrumental in the early founding of the Center for Behavioral Neuroscience, an NSF-funded Center that integrated faculty and trainees across several Atlanta area institutions, including HBCUs. Larry strongly believed in service to the field, contributing to numerous editorial activities including as associated editor on four journals and editorial board member for seven journals.

The impact of Larry's research is reflected in his h-index (111 at the moment) and the total number of citations to his work (nearly 50,000). Larry's work was also of great interest to the lay public and was often featured in outlets such as CNN, NPR, and the BBC to name just a few examples. Media coverage was important to Larry, and he encouraged it not because of his vanity but because he was committed to bringing science into public awareness. This led him to writing a popular book, 'The Chemistry Between Us,' to bring a new understanding of love, sex, and attraction to the lay public. In 2018, Larry was recruited by Rev. Patti Ricotta to visit African teachers, community councilors, clergy and their spouses to campaign against female genital mutilation (FGM). Larry said, "Seeing firsthand how love and bonding research is eliminating harmful cultural practices and improving lives and communities has been life-changing for me". Larry embraced the opportunity to travel far and wide to meet new scientific collaborators and immerse himself in new adventures: from eating massive bugs during a research trip to Madagascar to spending two weeks in India, teaching neuroscience to Tibetan monks.

Larry's life was truly influential to the field of behavioral neuroscience, both in terms of his science and his service. In recognition of his efforts, he was elected Member of the American College of Neuropsychopharmacology, the American College of Neuropsychopharmacology (ACNP), and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Sciences (AAAS). He was also a terrific role model and great friend for people near him. He mattered greatly to his students, colleagues, friends, his children, and to his loving wife and life partner, Dr. Anne Z. Murphy. Larry would frequently start his talks by showing a picture of him and Anne being married, as a natural segue into a discussion of love and bonding. Larry's communities continue to live on - they are self-sustaining, they serve as a source of joy, worldwide, in our shared mission to conduct social neuroscience research in his generous and collaborative way.

\*This is an abridged version of an in Memoriam that will be published in *Hormones and Behavior*.

'To honor Larry's exceptional and unwavering dedication to mentoring graduate students and junior faculty,' the SBN has established the Larry Young Mentorship Award. Donations to sustain this award can be made at the [SBN web site](#).

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