


OBITUARY

In Memoriam: Mitchell H. Friedlaender, MD (1946-2011)

The first time I met Mitchell Friedlaender was in 1988 when I was interviewing at Scripps Clinic. He was the junior ophthalmologist in the department at the time. He had joined 3 years earlier. After those first few minutes with him, I walked out of his office with a terrific first impression of Scripps. He was helpful, encouraging, and supportive from the start. He continued to be so during his many years of service at Scripps Clinic.

Over the course of his career, his influence benefited both his close colleagues and the field of ophthalmology at large. At the clinical level, he was a stabilizing presence and brought marvelous interpersonal skills and goodwill to our daily work. Most people he came in contact with considered him a friend. He cared deeply for his patients, many of whom stayed with him in excess of 25 years. He also contributed vastly to our knowledge of ocular allergy and dry eye through his extensively published research and the hundreds of lectures he gave in the United States and abroad. With little fanfare, he founded and perpetuated valuable forums for information exchange, such as the Aspen Corneal Society in Snowmass, Colorado, and the Pearls of Ocular Therapy in La Jolla, California.

Mitch was a devoted family man. His busy office seemed to get smaller and smaller over the years as pictures of his wife and 2 children shared space with his many diplomas and awards. He pursued personal interests with equal enthusiasm, as he mastered the piano and the Japanese language and avidly collected Chicano art.

With characteristic devotion, Mitch was working up until a few days before his passing. I visited with him in his office at that time, not knowing it was the last time I would see him. He was, as always, kindly and positive. I realized, leaving his office that evening, that nothing had changed.

Mitchell Friedlaender will be sorely missed by his colleagues, along with his family. His life and his career ended too soon. The consolation for me and the rest of us who practice ophthalmology is that the work we do as we go forward will continue to be enhanced by Mitch’s many valuable contributions.

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Financial Disclosure: None reported.