

Edna Foa, Clinical Psychiatry

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Edna Foa

Edna Foa, an emeritus professor of clinical psychiatry in the Perelman School of Medicine, died on March 24 due to complications of pneumonia. She was 88.

Dr. Foa was born to parents who had immigrated from Poland to Israel. She earned her bachelor's degree in psychology and literature from Bar-Ilan University in Ramat Gan, Israel, in 1962. Dr. Foa then moved to the United States, where she earned her master's degree in clinical psychology from the University of Illinois in 1970. She went on to pursue a doctorate in clinical psychology and personality from the University of Missouri that same year. Dr Foa taught at several universities and institutions in Pennsylvania, including Allegheny University and the Medical College of Philadelphia.

Dr. Foa came to Penn in 1999, where she founded and served as director of the Center for the Treatment and Study of Anxiety (CTSA), a division of the psychiatry department in the Perelman School of Medicine. Under Dr. Foa's leadership, CTSA became one of the world's preeminent centers for research, training, and clinical care in anxiety and trauma-related disorders.

Dr. Foa spent the majority of her professional career at Penn. She served as a lecturer in psychiatry in the Perelman School of Medicine and as a lecturer in CSTA. Beginning in 2019, Dr. Foa served as the director of the Neuroscience of Depression and Stress program. She retired in 2021 and took emeritus status, but continued to teach courses.

Dr. Foa was an internationally renowned authority on the psychopathology and treatment of anxiety and one of the world's leading experts in post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). She spent much of her career developing prolonged exposure therapy to treat PTSD, particularly as it relates to sexual assault. Dr. Foa lectured and led workshops on prolonged exposure therapy internationally, and authored 20 books and hundreds of peer-reviewed publications.

Dr. Foa was named to *Time Magazine's* 100 Most Influential People in the World in 2010 (*Almanac* May 11, 2010 (<https://almanac.upenn.edu/archive/volumes/v56/n33/hot.html>)). She also received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies, the Distinguished Scientist Award of the American Psychological Association, and an honorary doctorate from the University of Basel, among many honors. In 2018, she received the Carol Johnson Humanitarian Award from Women Organized Against Rape, a rape crisis center in Philadelphia (*Almanac* May 29, 2018 (<https://almanac.upenn.edu/articles/edna-foa-humanitarian-award>)).

Dr. Foa is survived by her three daughters, Dora, Yael, and Michelle; five grandchildren; and one great-grandchild.