

# Michael Cancro, Pathology & Laboratory Medicine

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*Michael Cancro*

Michael Paul Cancro, a professor and the vice chair for faculty development and academic affairs in the department of pathology & laboratory medicine in the Perelman School of Medicine (PSOM), died on February 7. He was 75.

Born in Washington, D.C., Dr. Cancro completed his undergraduate studies (1973) and PhD (1976), both in zoology, at the University of Maryland. He then joined the department of pathology & laboratory medicine at Penn's School of Medicine as a postdoctoral fellow, and was recruited as a lecturer the next year. In 1978, Dr. Cancro joined the tenure track as an assistant professor, becoming an associate professor in 1984 and a full professor in 1999.

Dr. Cancro also lectured in Penn's College of General Studies (precursor to today's College of Liberal & Professional Studies, in which Dr. Cancro also taught). He served as an assistant dean in PSOM and later as vice chair for faculty development and academic affairs in his department.

Dr. Cancro's teaching was widely praised by his students and colleagues. In 1984, he won the Leonard Berwick Memorial Teaching Award of Penn's School of Medicine. Two years later, he won a Lindback Award for Distinguished Teaching; his citation noted that "his immunology classes get first-place ratings and standing ovations, and his office a steady parade where he is said to offer 'help to the confused' and 'research opportunities to the enthusiastic'" (*Almanac* (<https://almanac.upenn.edu/archive/v32pdf/n30/041586.pdf>) April 15, 1986 (<https://almanac.upenn.edu/archive/v32pdf/n30/041586.pdf>)). In 1989, he won Penn's Distinguished Educator Award, recognizing high-quality teaching (*Almanac* (<https://almanac.upenn.edu/archive/v35pdf/n34/050989.pdf>) May 9, 1989 (<https://almanac.upenn.edu/archive/v35pdf/n34/050989.pdf>)). He was active in Penn's governance, serving on numerous University Council and other committees.

During his time at Penn, Dr. Cancro researched B lymphocyte development, selection, and homeostasis, and the immunobiology of aging. His lab defined the transitional B cell subset, a developmental stage spanning immature B cell formation in the bone marrow and final maturation in the periphery, and made key conceptual and mechanistic contributions toward understanding how the cytokine BlyS and its receptors control peripheral B cell selection and numbers. In 2013, Dr. Cancro received the Lady Barbara Colyton Autoimmune Research Award from PSOM for this work (*Almanac* ([https://almanac.upenn.edu/archive/volumes/v59/n22/pdf\\_n22/021913.pdf](https://almanac.upenn.edu/archive/volumes/v59/n22/pdf_n22/021913.pdf)) February 19, 2013 ([https://almanac.upenn.edu/archive/volumes/v59/n22/pdf\\_n22/021913.pdf](https://almanac.upenn.edu/archive/volumes/v59/n22/pdf_n22/021913.pdf))); PSOM noted in giving him the award that his work made him a leader in the field and contributed to the first new FDA-approved therapeutic drug for the treatment of systemic lupus erythematosus in 50 years. Outside of Penn, Dr. Cancro was widely recognized for his innovation; he was elected a fellow of the Henry Kunkel Society, the John Morgan Society, and the American Association of Immunologists.

He is survived by his wife of 49 years, Jamie (Robinson) Cancro; his daughters, Robin Cancro-Morrone (Jason Morrone) and Polly Cancro (Dan Boscov-Ellen); and his sister, Theresa Cancro (Dominic Chan). In lieu of flowers, contributions can be made to the Distance Learning Center, the Union of Concerned Scientists, or Doctors Without Borders.