

Randall Pittman, Pharmacology

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Randall Neal (Randy) Pittman, an emeritus professor of pharmacology in the Perelman School of Medicine, died on May 27 from Alzheimer's disease. He was 72.

Dr. Pittman grew up in Stantonsburg, North Carolina, then moved to Saratoga Springs, New York, where he excelled at sports during his tenure at Saratoga Central High School. He then attended the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill as a Morehead Scholar. After obtaining his BS in chemistry from North Carolina, he received a PhD in neuroscience from the University of Colorado in 1981, then held postdoctoral fellowships at Cal Tech in San Diego (UC San Diego School of Medicine) and Harvard University. In 1985, Dr. Pittman joined Penn's faculty as an assistant professor of pharmacology. He was promoted to an associate professor in 1991 and to a full professor in 2000.

At Penn, Dr. Pittman headed an award-winning research laboratory where he specialized in neuropharmacology and researched cures for Parkinson's disease, Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, and more. In his lab, Dr. Pittman signaled pathways in the execution phase of apoptosis and investigated the relationship between CAG trinucleotide repeat proteins, the nuclear environment, the ubiquitin/proteasome machinery, and neuronal dysfunction/death. He performed apoptosis experiments that focused on understanding cellular events controlling signal transduction in the execution phase, and also studied kinase signaling at the interface of cell survival and cell death. He received multiple awards from the University Research Foundation (URF) to support this work.

In 1995, Dr. Pittman won the School of Medicine award for distinguished teaching (*Almanac* April 18, 1995 (<https://almanac.upenn.edu/archive/v41pdf/n29/041895.pdf>)). His colleagues lauded him as "an outstanding mentor to graduate students" and said that he "has played a major role in the recruitment and advising of graduate students in pharmacology, and has been particularly active in mentoring minority students. He is undoubtedly an outstanding role model for graduate students, and has had a major impact on the quality of graduate education at Penn." A student said, "the respect with which he treats the students and his concern for them as individuals and valued colleagues is perhaps the most salient facet of his training skills." Dr. Pittman retired from Penn and took emeritus status in 2013.

Dr. Pittman was preceded in death by his wife, Libby Voss Pittman; his parents, Martha Owens Pittman and Fred Beasley Pittman; and his brother Martin O. Pittman. He is survived by his children, Sarah Pittman-Patel (Neel) and Tom (Stephanie O'Toole); his grandsons, Ethan and Wyatt; his brother, Robert; his sister, Bethanne Matari; and his uncle, Ray; along with many cousins. Donations in remembrance of Dr. Pittman can be made to the Alzheimer's Foundation of America.