

## In Memoriam

# Loren H Parsons—Prolific Researcher, Powerful Friend, and Mentor

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Loren 'Larry' H Parsons died in his sleep on the morning of 21 June 2016. He was 51 years old. Even in a career cut dramatically short, Larry's research secures his place among the most important addiction researchers of our time. Just as notable, Larry's personal qualities of genuine humility and sincere compassion place him forever in the hearts of those who knew him.

Larry was born in Colorado and attended high school in Oregon. In 1988, he earned a Bachelor of Arts in Chemistry at Whitman College in Walla Walla, Washington. He launched his research career with Dr JB Justice at Emory University, where he earned his doctorate in Chemistry. In 1992, Larry joined The Scripps Research Institute as a postdoctoral fellow with Dr Friedbert Weiss, and never left. He rose through the ranks to professor and ultimately Director of the Alcohol Research Center.

With more than 80 research reports, 25 reviews and chapters, and nearly continuous federal funding since 1993, Larry was already one of the most respected addiction scientists of our era. His early work clarified the use of *in vivo* microdialysis to quantify neurotransmission in the brain, and helped elucidate the importance of dopamine and serotonin in drug withdrawal. Larry went on to conduct critical studies of intravenous drug self-administration in rodents that extended our understanding of dopamine,

serotonin, GABA, and endogenous opioids in the motivational effects of cocaine, heroin, and ethanol.

Perhaps his most seminal contributions defined endocannabinoid signaling and its role in drug-related behavior. He established novel microdialysis and mass spectrometry procedures for measuring these lipids, and used them to characterize changes in endocannabinoids during drug exposure, withdrawal, stress, and other emotional states. With innovative behavioral models of impulsivity and attention, he further described the neurochemical mechanisms of cognitive dysfunction induced by ethanol and tetrahydrocannabinol.

Larry's approach to science was admirable. His data were derived from meticulous methodologies, his results were interpreted with insight, and his publications were carefully composed to convey meanings that were simultaneously conservative and progressive. His breadth and depth of knowledge, coupled with fast intellectual processing, enabled him to interact with myriad collaborators and trainees. His outstanding productivity and intellectualism, however, were cloaked in an entirely casual manner.

Larry Parsons was amazingly successful, yet truly humble and approachable. He achieved greatness both as a scientist and a human being. He never let anyone feel unimportant. He aided colleagues through all sorts of challenges, able to listen and hear, suggest solutions, debate options, and map a brighter future. Usually conversations with Larry started with a cup of coffee, often they were accompanied by music from his vast collection, and occasionally they continued over a craft beer after work. Whenever you left Larry's presence, it was with a renewed clarity, motivation, and a deep sense of friendship. When you expressed your heartfelt thanks for his input, you received a comfortable shrug and an invitation to come back anytime.

Balancing work and family, Larry was dedicated to both. He is survived by his wife of 22 years, Jodi Schuette Parsons, impressive in her own right as a chemist and regulatory affairs director in the pharmaceutical industry. Their son Cole, and daughter Caelen, are poised for successful navigation of life's opportunities. Larry is also survived by his parents Bernie and Sally, brother Ken, sister Kathy, five nephews, four nieces, three grand-nephews, and three grand-nieces, as well as an extended family of scientists who mourn deeply with them. Thank you, Larry, for lessons in science and in life. Around the world, we raise a beaker, cup, or pint, and toast your humble greatness.

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