

Henry Michael Danciger, Ph.D. died 4 January 2010 from lung cancer. Dr. Danciger, Michael, was born 14 December 1943 and grew up in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He graduated from Drexel University in 1966 with a B.S. degree in biology. In 1971 he earned a Ph.D. in microbiology from the University of Oregon where he studied parasitology, specializing in giardia. After completing his Ph.D., he took a crash course in Spanish to prepare for his postdoctoral study in Columbia where he also studied the pathology of giardia in the Columbian population. He returned to the United States in 1973, working for the Health Department in San Diego and later teaching at Chapman College (now Chapman University) in Orange, California.

Michael moved to the Los Angeles area and began teaching at Loyola Marymount University full time in 1978. The students found him to be an inspired professor, in recognition of which he received the Teacher of the Year Award for the College of Science and Engineering in 1980 and 1981. He served as the chair of the Biology Department from 1995 to 2002. Michael's influence has been wide and deep, carried on by his many students who went on to medical school or careers in the biomedical sciences. He had a passion for research, and his studies contributed to groundwork for gene therapies for many vision-related diseases. Michael was a visiting scholar in vision molecular genetics at the Jules Stein Eye Institute at UCLA from 1988 to 1995. His work with the Kern Family Center for the Study of Retinal Degeneration, collaborating with colleagues at UCLA, UC Berkeley, UC San Francisco and Stanford, sought to identify a single gene responsible for age-related retinal degeneration. In 1999 he was awarded the Foundation Fighting Blindness Trustee Award for outstanding research achievement. Since 2001, Michael served as principal investigator on a major grant project from the National Eye Institute, a division of the National Institutes of Health, to identify genes that reduce or slow retinal decline. In his career, he was co-author on fifty scientific publications, nearly all of them involving the genetics of retinal degeneration.

Almost two years ago, Michael was diagnosed with advanced lung cancer. During his 20 month illness, Michael, his colleagues, his friends, and his spiritual community grew even closer, suffering together, but also embracing his last stage of life to live from the heart and to give to one another. The man who studied eye disease most of his professional life became blind in the last weeks of his life, yet he saw and gave so much with his heart over many years that his lasting legacy is clearly seen by all. Michael is survived by his wife, Jan, his son, Jeffrey, and his daughter, Meryl.

Private services were held for Michael on 9 January 2010. In lieu of flowers, the family has asked that donations be made to the American Cancer Society.