We mourn the untimely passing of Alan Gewirtz, a member of the JCI Editorial Board, who died on November 17, 2010, at the age of 61. Alan received his undergraduate degree from Colgate University, where, in keeping with a lifelong interest in the world around him, he majored in marine biology. After graduating from SUNY Buffalo Medical College and completing a medical residency at The Mount Sinai Hospital (New York, New York, USA), he went to Yale University for clinical training in hematology and oncology. While at Yale, he worked with Ron Hoffman, Ed Cadman, and Ed Benz to make seminal contributions to the field of megakaryocyte developmental biology. Later, as an independent researcher at Temple University, and then at the University of Pennsylvania, Alan pioneered the use of antisense RNA technologies for the treatment of leukemia, ultimately extending this work to a more global application of oligonucleotide therapeutics for treating stem cell disorders. Alan’s extraordinary scientific accomplishments were well known and deservedly well recognized. His research was published in journals such as Science, Nature Medicine, Nature Genetics, PNAS, The Journal of Experimental Medicine, Blood, and, of course, the JCI. He was elected to membership in both the American Society for Clinical Investigation and the Association of American Physicians. He served on numerous national and international scientific advisory committees and […]

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A tribute to Alan M. Gewirtz

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Feisty, loyal, gentle, combative, impassioned, gracious, spirited . . . these are all adjectives that readily described Alan. His combination of attributes (and adjectives) was often a source of friction among his peers, but everyone who worked with him had the utmost respect for him and his work.

Along with his research, Alan was a devotional pilot, and was actually certified to fly small planes. Alan was a founding member of the Penn JCI Editorial Board. Of the 19 Associate Editors currently on our masthead, only eight served in that capacity for our first issue (March 2007), Alan among them. He was a force in our weekly meetings. He usually held strong opinions, but was always willing to be persuaded by the facts. If he thought the ideas in a manuscript had merit, he fought passionately for the paper. He was a strong author advocate — he wanted us to publish good science and to publish it quickly, rather than ask the authors to spend months doing “clean-up” experiments that were unnecessary. He also never forgot what the C in JCI stands for. More than any other Penn board member, past or present, Alan would ask whether the paper, the model, and the experiments were relevant to human disease. If the work could be validated with human samples, he would insist on the authors doing it. Alan never forgot that the mission of biomedical research is to improve human health.

We thank Alan’s many friends and colleagues who shared their feelings about him with us — the joy that he brought into their lives, and ours, is palpable. He will be sorely missed.

Laurence A. Turka
Editor in Chief

Stephen G. Emerson
Senior Editor