A Tribute to
Neuroepidemiologist Dr. Bruce Schoenberg
1942–1987

Murray Goldstein, DO, MPH

Bruce S. Schoenberg, MD, PhD, 44, a dedicated and prolific neuroepidemiologist who was chief of the neuroepidemiology branch at the National Institute of Neurological and Communicative Disorders and Stroke (NINCDS) until May, died July 14 of cancer. He left a generous scientific legacy, one that belies his relatively short life.

Dr. Schoenberg was internationally respected for his singular contributions to the methodology of neuroepidemiologic investigations. Among his greatest gifts to the field were neuroepidemiologic studies of stroke. In 1978, Dr. Schoenberg directed a door-to-door survey of the 25,000 residents of Mississippi’s Copiah County to determine the first racial differentials in the magnitude and clinical presentation of stroke and other neurologic disorders in the United States. His public health doctoral dissertation was a prospective study of high blood pressure and cardiac disorders as risk factors for stroke. Dr. Schoenberg was also the first to measure the magnitude of cerebrovascular disease among infants and children in a U.S. community.

Dr. Schoenberg’s reputation and contributions to neuroepidemiology extended well beyond U.S. boundaries. He became the crucial element in initiating epidemiologic studies of neurologic disease in West Africa, Mexico, Peru, Ecuador, China, and India. He was also solely responsible for establishing foci of neuroepidemiologic expertise in more than a dozen countries in Asia, Africa, Europe, and South America.

In his lifetime, Dr. Schoenberg developed resoundingly effective professional alliances, creating a network for gathering neuroepidemiologic information and training young scientists from around the globe. He advised people from all over the world, and he went anywhere in the world he might find new insight.

Dr. Schoenberg had an exceedingly rare grasp and understanding of neuroepidemiology. Many foreign scientists came to the National Institutes of Health to work with him, and his advice and insight were sought constantly by health ministries, colleagues, and collaborators. He served as a U.S. government consultant to foreign nations to explore the incidence and causes of neurologic disease.

Dr. Schoenberg’s association with the National Institutes of Health began while he was still in medical school when he entered a summer research training program with the National Cancer Institute (NCI). In 1968, on graduation from Yale University School of Medicine, he rejoined NCI for 2 years as a staff associate. He joined the NINCDS in 1975 as chief of the Institute’s neuroepidemiology section and became chief of the neuroepidemiology branch in 1984.

Dr. Schoenberg earned an MPH and a DrPH from Johns Hopkins University School of Hygiene and Public Health under the guidance of Dr. Abraham Lilienfeld, and an MS in neurology from the University of Minnesota. He completed a 1-year internship in internal medicine and a 4-year residency in neurology at Mayo Graduate School of Medicine, the latter supported by a fellowship from the then National Institute of Neurological Diseases and Stroke.

Throughout his own training and research, Dr. Schoenberg always found time to share with others the knowledge he had assimilated. He had a great facility for passing on his understanding in lecture style. He
conducted training programs in neuroepidemiology in the U.S. and abroad that have established the discipline on an international basis.

Dr. Schoenberg was a visiting scientist or lecturer at several medical institutions, including Yale University School of Medicine, Georgetown University School of Medicine, and the Mayo Clinic. He was also a visiting professor in the neurology departments of universities in Mexico City, Florence, Madrid, Beijing, and Lima, Peru.

With more than 350 publications to his credit, Dr. Schoenberg was also the founding editor-in-chief of the journal *Neuroepidemiology* and the author of the most authoritative textbook in neuroepidemiology, *Advances in Neurology: Neurological Epidemiology (Principles and Clinical Applications)*.

Even after mid-April when cancer was diagnosed, Dr. Schoenberg continued to work with his collaborators, some of whom came from overseas. His final contributions to his profession were the notes he dictated to his secretary from his hospital room.

On June 23, Dr. Schoenberg received the rarely conferred Surgeon General's Medallion at a presentation by Dr. C. Everett Koop. He was cited for his "unique contributions in the field of epidemiology and the neurosciences." Recipients of the medallion are chosen personally by the surgeon general, and Dr. Schoenberg is only the seventh person to be so honored.

Dr. Schoenberg is survived by his wife and collaborator Devera Glazer Schoenberg; his son Ian Charles, 11; his daughter Claire Jennifer, 9, all of Bethesda, Md.; and his parents Mr. and Mrs. Mitchell Schoenberg of Newark, N.J.

A memorial fund that will enable junior neuroepidemiologists to present papers at the annual American Academy of Neurology meetings has been established in Dr. Schoenberg's honor. Donations to the fund may be sent to the Bruce S. Schoenberg Fund, c/o The American Academy of Neurology, 2221 University Avenue, S.E., Suite 335, Minneapolis, MN 55414.

Dr. Bruce Schoenberg will not be missed; he will be remembered as a colleague, a scientist, a teacher, and a friend. The work he initiated is being continued in all areas of the world. The results of these studies are our living memory of him.
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*Stroke*. 1987;18:985-986
doi: 10.1161/01.STR.18.6.985

*Stroke* is published by the American Heart Association, 7272 Greenville Avenue, Dallas, TX 75231
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Print ISSN: 0039-2499. Online ISSN: 1524-4628

The online version of this article, along with updated information and services, is located on the
World Wide Web at:
http://stroke.ahajournals.org/content/18/6/985.citation

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