

UT Southwestern Medical Center

In Memoriam: Dr. Beth Levine

June 16, 2020

Dear Colleagues:

We are saddened to share news of the passing of our esteemed colleague, Beth Levine, M.D., Professor of Internal Medicine and Microbiology, Director of the Center for Autophagy Research, and holder of the Charles Cameron Sprague Distinguished Chair in Biomedical Science.

On behalf of the entire UT Southwestern community, we offer our sincerest condolences to Dr. Levine's family, including her husband, Dr. Milton Packer, a cardiologist and former Professor and Chair of the Department of Clinical Sciences at UT Southwestern, and her two children. Dr. Levine had been battling breast cancer. She died at her home in Dallas.

An Investigator with the Howard Hughes Medical Institute since 2008 as well as a member of the National Academy of Sciences, Dr. Levine was a widely recognized leader in research on autophagy, a housekeeping process in which cells rid themselves of damaged constituents in order to maintain cellular health. She was known particularly for her work on the mammalian autophagy gene *beclin 1* and the role *beclin 1* and other components of the autophagy pathway play in tumor suppression, innate immunity, aging, and metabolism. Dr. Levine's group identified *beclin 1* as the first essential mammalian autophagy gene and described its action as a tumor suppressor gene linked to human breast and ovarian cancer. Her studies were the first to demonstrate that defects in autophagy contribute importantly to cancer, neurodegenerative disorders, viral infections, diabetes, and other human diseases. In 2014, she received the coveted American Society for Clinical Investigation Stanley J. Korsmeyer Award, and she has been recognized by numerous other prestigious accolades for her work.

Dr. Levine was born in Newark, New Jersey, in 1960. After graduating magna cum laude from Brown University in 1981, she received her medical degree from Cornell University Medical College in 1986, followed by a residency in internal medicine at the Mount Sinai Hospital in New York. She was a postdoctoral fellow in infectious diseases and virology at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine from 1989 through 1992 and worked as an Assistant Professor and then as an Associate Professor at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons (now the Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons) until 2004. That year she was recruited by UT Southwestern to become Chief of the Division of Infectious Diseases and the Jay P. Sanford Professor in Infectious Diseases. Seven years later, Dr. Levine became Director of UTSW's Center for Autophagy Research.

A member of the American Society for Clinical Investigation and the Association of American Physicians, Dr. Levine will be remembered by colleagues as an elegant, driven, and focused researcher who demanded the best from herself and the over 50 graduate students and postdoctoral researchers she

mentored. Because of her efforts, autophagy moved from a phenomenon seen in yeast to become an important mechanism of maintaining human health.

Dr. Levine's legacy lives on through the lasting contributions she made to the field of autophagy research and the impact she had on future physicians and researchers as a professor and laboratory mentor. She will be deeply missed.

Sincerely,

W. P. Andrew Lee, M.D.
Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost
Dean, UT Southwestern Medical School

Daniel K. Podolsky, M.D.
President, UT Southwestern Medical Center