

Themed Section: Analytical Receptor Pharmacology in Drug Discovery

Foreword to *Reflections on Drug Research* by Sir James Black

In August 2002 Jim Black was diagnosed with inoperable metastatic prostate cancer. His urologist told me that life expectancy was around 2 years. Together we assessed our way of life and what mattered. At this time Jim was 78, and still enthusiastically going to work every weekday, mainly concentrating on his gastrin antagonist project. There was no question of this being slowed down but rather an appreciation that time was finite, and that he had less time than previously assumed to move this project forward, and also to initiate new projects or encourage longstanding trusted friends and colleagues to do so. So plans for the future, lobbying for financial support and preparing papers for publication continued. John Smythe of Edinburgh and the European Journal of Cancer was a champion who facilitated publication, and Malcolm Boyce of Hammersmith Medicines Research was and continues to be a much valued collaborator in the drive to bring the gastrin antagonist to market.

On a wider level, Jim continued to be keen to talk to and enthuse young researchers to follow their dreams, not to settle for a safe confirmatory project along a well trodden path, but to push their able brains to the limits and work in novel exciting areas. Sadly not always the areas that Research Councils find attractive.

As Jim became frailer over the last 6 months of his life, he was forced to spend more time at home at the computer than in his office at King's. The essay which follows this introduction on his reflections on drug research, covering both his personal experience and his thoughts for the future was written at this time. He wrote slowly and thoughtfully with many drafts of his manuscripts. His last alterations to this draft were made on February 10 2010. He died on March 22 having spent most of the previous 5 months in hospitals or hospices. His first request when he reached St Christopher's Hospice in south London was that the IT manager would set up his computer at the bedside. St Christopher's did not let him down.

It has been a huge privilege to share life with such a deep and powerful intellect, and also unforgettably enjoyable to share the fun and friendships of our wider life together.

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This article is part of a themed section on Analytical Receptor Pharmacology in Drug Discovery. To view the other articles in this section visit <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/bph.2010.161.issue-6>
To view the article by Sir James Black visit <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1476-5381.2010.01019.x>