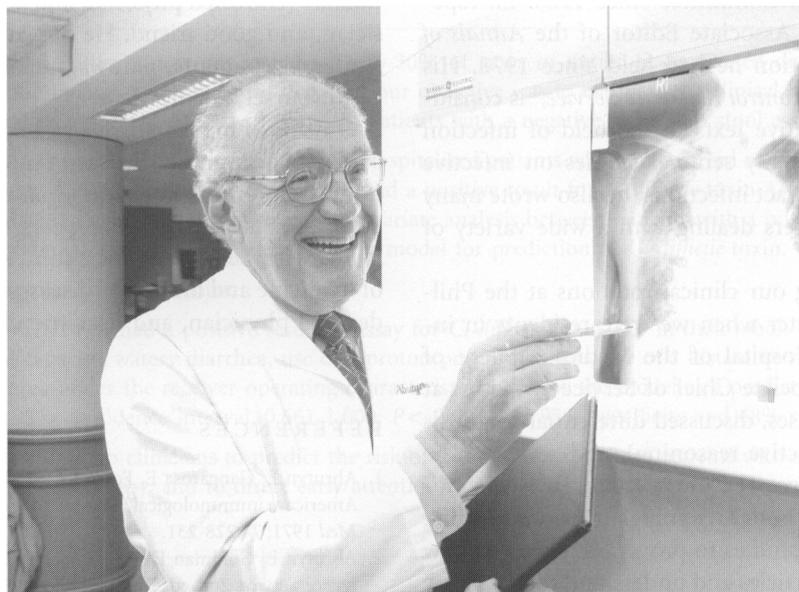


## OBITUARY

## Elias Abrutyn, MD, MACP (1940-2007)

Allan R. Tunkel, MD, PhD; Marla J. Gold, MD



Elias Abrutyn (1940-2007)

In 1968, a young physician, fresh out of his residency in internal medicine at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania, joined the Epidemic Intelligence Service at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and left for Pakistan to study cholera by testing the efficacy of a monovalent Inaba vaccine. Prior to the study, he received 2 doses of the vaccine and a booster inoculation. After arrival in East Pakistan, the physician had close contact with 5-10 cholera patients daily. Three weeks later, he became ill. Dark-field microscopic examination of a stool sample revealed *Vibrio cholerae*, later confirmed by 2 stool cultures (*V. cholerae*, classical biotype, Inaba serotype). The physician did well with treatment, which consisted of intravenous fluids and oral tetracycline. He recovered 4 days later and returned to duty. So began the career of the physician Dr. Eli Abrutyn. Notably, he published his case in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*,<sup>1</sup>

initiating a long-running association with this prestigious journal and the American College of Physicians (ACP).

After his time at the CDC, Eli returned to Philadelphia, where he served as Chief Resident and became the first fellow to complete the infectious diseases program at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania. He spent many years at the Philadelphia Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Center, serving as Associate Chief of the Medical Service and Chief of Infectious Diseases as well as Professor of Medicine at the Medical College of Pennsylvania. In 1997, he left the VA to come to the MCP Hahnemann University as Vice Chairman of the Department of Medicine. One year later, he became Interim Chairman, and was instrumental in leading the department and maintaining the integrity and excellence of the educational and clinical programs during very challenging times for the School of Medicine. Most recently, he was Interim

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Chief of the Division of Infectious Diseases, and Associate Provost and Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs at Drexel University College of Medicine.

Throughout his career, Eli was involved in numerous medical associations, serving in major leadership roles. He was President of the Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America in 1998, and served as Governor of the Eastern Pennsylvania Region of the ACP from 1992 through 1996; he was awarded Mastership of the ACP in 2001. He was a Fellow of the Infectious Diseases Society of America and had served on its Publications Committee since 1988. Eli especially enjoyed his role as Associate Editor of the *Annals of Internal Medicine*, a position he had held since 1978. His book, *Saunders Infection Control Reference Service*,<sup>2</sup> is considered one of the authoritative texts in the field of infection control. He coauthored many seminal studies on infective endocarditis and urinary tract infections; he also wrote many editorials and book chapters dealing with a wide variety of infectious diseases.

We first met Eli during our clinical rotations at the Philadelphia VA Medical Center when we were residents in internal medicine at the Hospital of the Medical College of Pennsylvania; he was Associate Chief of Service at the VA at the time. We presented cases, discussed differential diagnosis (he loved the art of deductive reasoning), and reviewed the literature under his tutelage. The literature reviews were notable—what we initially thought significant in our reading often needed many more studies to prove. Eli taught us how to critically read journal articles and understand their validity

and significance. He was always calm in his approach to clinical cases, and seemed to easily draw on countless scholarly works to make his point and provide the best care to his patients. As we progressed in our careers and became his colleagues, he looked out for us. Opportunities to write review articles and book chapters would be sent our way, always accompanied with the phrase “I have a great opportunity for you.” He was best in times of chaos—his calm and rational approach always prevailed. He chose the right path and was not afraid to make the tough decisions. He was an internationally renowned physician and academician, respected physician, and good friend. He has mentored countless medical students, residents, fellows, and faculty—we are proud to count ourselves among them.

Outside of medicine, Eli was a devoted family man, an avid bridge player, and a die-hard fan of the Philadelphia Eagles (almost never missing a home game). His family brought out the best in him. Eli was 66 years old and is survived by his loving wife, Leslye, and his 2 sons, Alex and Adam. The world of medicine and infectious diseases has lost a brilliant scholar, devoted physician, and dear friend.

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