

In Memoriam: George R. Seage III, 1957–2021

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On the second day of 2021, I lost my beloved husband of 32 years and our community lost a brilliant researcher, dedicated mentor and advocate, and inspiring leader. George died following a difficult and disappointing course of treatment for acute myeloid leukemia which he met with courage, persistence, and dignity. This Memoriam includes both professional and personal remembrances that I hope will convey the depth of our collective loss.

George was raised in Massapequa Park, New York, where he enjoyed playing street hockey and baseball, outings to Jones Beach, performing with his school orchestra, and playing mischievous tricks on his younger sister. Doing well academically was also important, particularly because he wanted to obtain a New York State Regent's scholarship to help defray the cost of college. George was delighted when he was accepted to SUNY at Stony Brook (New York) where he graduated with a BS in Biology in 1979. After a work hiatus that included field research on homing pigeons, he attended Boston University School of Public Health (SPH) where he graduated with a master of public health (MPH) degree in environmental health in 1983 and doctor of science degree in epidemiology in 1991. Following receipt of his doctorate, George joined the faculty of Boston University SPH and subsequently Harvard TH Chan SPH where he was promoted to Professor of Epidemiology in 2012.

George and I met during his MPH program while we were both working as research assistants in the Department

of Epidemiology at Harvard Chan SPH. He said it was love at first sight but it took me a while to feel the same way. Fortunately, my feelings grew and we had a long and special partnership in our personal and professional lives. The former produced our talented and thoughtful son Greg and the latter our textbook *Essentials of Epidemiology in Public Health*, now in its fourth edition.

George was a leader in the field of HIV research, and he was particularly well known for his work on behavioral aspects of HIV transmission and in investigating the effects of antiretroviral therapy on the long-term health of children with perinatal HIV infection. During the early years of the HIV epidemic, George served as the first director of the Massachusetts AIDS Surveillance Program, focusing on the behavioral and biologic aspects of adult and pediatric HIV transmission, natural history, and treatment. He also provided leadership to the Boston Partners Study, Boston Young Men's Study, the HIVNET Vaccine Preparedness Study, and the Pediatric AIDS Clinical Trials Group 219C study. His role as principal investigator for the HIVNET study was a critical formative experience in leading a national network and was a key turning point that defined the rest of his career.

For the last 15 years, George was principal investigator of the Pediatric HIV/AIDS Cohort Study (PHACS) Data and Operations Center based at Harvard Chan SPH. The PHACS network includes the largest US-based study of pregnant

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women with HIV along with their children, and the largest study of adolescents who were born with HIV and have lived with the consequences of perinatal infection their entire lives. His leadership on PHACS has led to increased understanding of the long-term impact and safety of in-utero antiretroviral and HIV exposure in infants. This knowledge has improved care and antiretroviral drug safety guidelines for children, young adults, and families all over the world. Before he became ill, George led his team's effort to write a grant that re-envisioned the next 5 years of PHACS, which was recently funded by *nine* of the National Institutes of Health.

George also took great joy in mentoring the next generation of infectious disease epidemiology scholars. To that end, he helped craft a program to mentor early career investigators in PHACS, he was also the co-principal investigator of a T32 graduate training program in the epidemiology of infectious diseases and biodefense and was also the director of the Interdisciplinary Program in Infectious Disease Epidemiology at Harvard Chan SPH.

With over 200 publications in major scientific journals, George made immense contributions to our understanding of HIV transmission and prevention and disease consequences, translating the science into sound public health policy at the federal, state, and local levels. In recognition of these achievements, he was inducted into the Massapequa High Schools Hall of Fame and received the Massachusetts Governor's

Award for Outstanding Contributions to AIDS Research, the Fenway Community Health Center Research Award, and the Boston University SPH Alumni Award. However, his proudest accomplishments were fostering true collaboration within his PHACS community and providing a greater platform for the voices of people living with HIV. In particular, George made a point of spending time with the PHACS adult and young adult community advisory boards, wanting to learn the community's biggest priorities as a context for decisions about scientific priorities and budgets. His openness about his own illness allowed young adult members of the community advisory board to feel safe sharing their stories in a documentary film called "The Faces of PHACS," which premiered at the Vail Film Festival in 2018.

On a personal level, George was gracious, kind, and quick-witted, with a wonderful sense of humor and a playful smile. Known for his approachable nature, he enjoyed any opportunity to talk to fellow researchers, staff, students, and study participants, and share his stories, no matter how busy he was. All of these characteristics contribute to George's remarkable legacy not just in infectious disease epidemiology, but also in the indelible imprint he left on his family and many dear friends and colleagues. Let us honor his legacy by paying forward the lessons he taught us about practicing inclusive science, advocacy, and leadership, and being a true friend.