

# Dr. Charles A. Janeway, Jr. (1943–2003)

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Charles Alderson Janeway, Jr. professor of immunobiology at Yale University died on April 12, 2003 after a long struggle with cancer. Born in 1943 Dr. Janeway earned his undergraduate and medical degrees from Harvard University. During his “Wanderjahre” he spent several years working at Uppsala University in Sweden with Hans Wigzell, with John Humphrey at National Institute for Medical Research in London and with William (Bill) Paul at National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, MD. He joined Yale’s faculty in 1977.

Among his many important and original scientific achievements and discoveries at least one will be remembered in many years to come. In 1989 he proposed on theoretical grounds that T cells responsible for specific immune responses against pathogens must be instructed to undertake their duties by cells of the innate immune system, mainly macrophages. These latter cells have specific membrane receptors that recognize foreign microorganisms. It is worthwhile to remember that at that time innate immunity was regarded as a mechanism of lesser significance than specific immunity arising due exon shuffling. Dr. Janeway’s idea was presumably the most important turning-point since discovery of innate immunity a century ago by Ilya Metchnikoff. His theoretical considerations and later discovery with a colleague Dr. Ruslan Medzhitow of the first toll-like receptor fulfilling the expectations changed deeply our understanding how the immune system is working.

Dr Janeway’s laboratory was always open to people from all corners of the world, and in fact it was overcrowded by young people of different nationalities and ethnic backgrounds. His attitude to young scientists was unique—he left them in laboratory as many freedom as possible believing that excessively monitored do not have chance to demonstrate as good they are.

Dr C.A. Janeway, Jr. was president of the American Association of Immunologists in 1997–1998. He was in Editorial Boards of numerous prestigious journals and his exceptional gift to write clearly about most complicated things was commonly acknowledged. Dr Janeway got numerous awards for his scientific achievements and received Honorary Doctors Degree from Copernicus Medical



University in Cracow in 1991. He was a member of National Academy of Science USA.

I have spent between 1984–1988 over one year, in Dr. Janeway’s laboratory working on immune regulatory mechanisms. Once we chatted over a glass of beer about the histories of our families. I already knew that it was a long line of doctors in Dr. Janeway’s family beginning from his great-grandfather, through grandfather and father who all were professors of medicine at prestigious medical schools – Columbia, Johns Hopkins, Harvard. He told me also that there exist a family legend that in sixteen century his forbear moved from Genova (Italy) to England (phonetically Genova-Janeway) and later his descendants moved to British colonies in America. True or not such a background could explain Dr. Janeway’s unusual graphic talents as well as his deep understanding of poetry.

The immunological community lost with Dr. Janeway death one of its most brilliant and talented Scientists and very original theoretician and thinker.