

In Memoriam: Stuart Moss



The SSR has learned with great sadness of the passing of Dr. Stuart Moss on November 13, 2021 due to complications following cardiac surgery. Too early have we lost a great colleague, friend, and advocate of our science. Stuart was an asker of questions, a seeker of answers, a dedicated and careful experimentalist, and, above all, a powerful advocate for the field, his colleagues, and especially young people entering the biomedical sciences.

After training at University of Rochester, Harvard, and University of Washington, Stuart became a faculty member, first at Temple University, and then at the University of Pennsylvania. His scientific interests and passions were in the molecular pathways that allowed sperm and eggs mature and become competent for fertilization. His laboratory at Penn was a hotbed of excited and engaged young scientists exploiting the state-of-the-art techniques to answer compelling questions about gamete biology, such as about the roles of egg and sperm scaffolding proteins, functions of ATP, adenyl cyclase, and more. These and other discoveries are relevant to in vitro fertilization and methods for assisted reproduction in cases of infertility. Throughout all this groundbreaking work, Stuart continually engaged and trained young scientists. These individuals still treasure the excitement and the rigor of the science as they now train scientists in their labs or engage in clinical reproduction.

All of these studies had considerable impact in the fields of reproductive sciences and would have been enough for most scientists. But Stuart was driven to advocate for and enable reproductive biology and scientists like himself, leading him in 2007 to leave the bench for the National Institutes of Health. For everyone in the reproductive sciences, this was a momentous move that has greatly advanced our field.

While at the NIH, Stuart first served as the Scientific Review Officer running the Cellular, Molecular, and Integrative Reproduction (CMIR) grant review panel (2007-2009), and

then became Program Officer for male reproductive health, originally in the Reproductive Sciences Branch, now the Fertility and Infertility Branch of NICHD. In this capacity, for more than a decade, he promoted various lines of investigation by reproductive biologists throughout the United States. At the most basic level, this entailed interacting in a personal and supportive way with virtually every scientist who applied for and/or received funding for research in the area of male reproductive health. Scientists all over the country have known that they could get the "straight stuff" from Stuart, that he would accurately interpret scientific review statements, and provide best advice about avenues towards funding. Bringing along the next generation, Stuart and his NIH program colleagues ran panel discussions at SSR annual meetings that would inform young scientists (PhD students and early career scientists) how the NIH funding process works and provide strategies and tips for persuasive grant writing. As his career in the Fertility and Infertility Branch progressed, Stuart became incredibly active at a higher level. He participated in developing new programs to support forward-thinking science, such as how infertility might be an early predictor of overall health status later in life. He also became interested in the policy side of NICHD and spent part of his time as a program analyst in the Office of Legislation, Public Policy, and Ethics at NICHD. Perhaps most notably, he has skillfully managed the National Centers for Translational Research in Reproduction, a national consortium of groups engaged in basic science and clinical applications in reproductive biomedicine. This group has performed stellar research, engaged in developing and promoting new directions in reproductive health and fertility, and trained dozens of young scientists and clinicians. Through all of this, he remained deeply committed to the scientists that he supported as a program officer, and nurturing his research portfolio with the same care and attention that he gave to his lab of research trainees and staff. Those of us who speak to colleagues receiving funding from other divisions of NIH and the federal government know that we are extremely fortunate with our program officers, and Stuart especially was a "curve-breaker" in the support and guidance he provided. We mourn the loss of one of our field's greatest advocates and a true gem of a human being.