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**I**rwin D. Mandel, DDS, Professor *Emeritus* of Dental Medicine of the Columbia University College of Dental Medicine and Ninth President of the American Association for Dental Research (1980-81), died on May 26, 2011 at the age of 89. Irwin graduated from City College of the City of New York in 1942 and received his dental degree from Columbia University in 1945, beginning a life-long association with that institution.

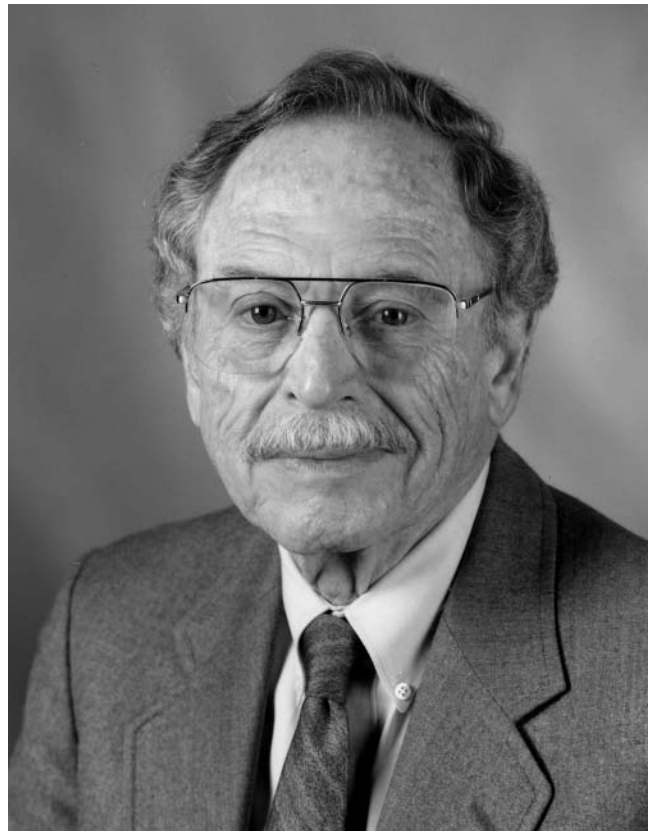
Starting as a research assistant in 1946, Irwin maintained a part-time teaching/research presence at Columbia until 1968, when he became one of the few full-time faculty members at the (then) School of Dental and Oral Surgery. Irwin founded and served as the director of the Division of Preventive Dentistry at Columbia, the first entity in the country focused on evidence- and biologically based principles of prevention. He also served as the founding director of the Center for Clinical Research in Dentistry (another concept clearly ahead of its time), and as the Dental School's Associate Dean for Research before attaining *emeritus* status in 1992. As a researcher, Irwin's observations about experimental gingivitis helped to lay a foundation for modern preventive dentistry. He made seminal contributions to our understanding of the composition of saliva and its functions. His work on the "non-immune" defense system of saliva presaged what we now know as the innate immune system. Irwin's classic studies of using saliva as a diagnostic agent served as the prelude for several important point-of-care diagnostic tests that have had a significant impact on care at the community level. As a clinician, scientist, and teacher, Irwin catalyzed a change in the focus of dentistry from "pothole" repair to prevention (Mandel, 1978).

Irwin's mentorship of generations of dental students at Columbia was extraordinary and has been well-documented (Baum *et al.*, 1997). I enjoyed the great privilege of being part of Irwin's large "salvation army" while attending dental school. Irwin remained a mentor to me throughout my career by creating a flexible mentoring "network". He used his personal friendships with Columbia's scientific giants like Elvin Kabat and Bernard Erlanger to ensure that I had access to the very best ideas and equipment as a dental student. Subsequently, he linked me to important role models such as Dan Fine at Columbia, Bruce Baum at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), Mike Levine and Mark Herzberg at Buffalo, and Bill Bowen at Rochester, each of whom has had a significant impact on my career. Irwin's willingness to evolve as my mentor over time

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## In Memoriam: Irwin D. Mandel, the Ninth President of the AADR



was remarkable. I slowly transitioned from being his student, to a junior colleague, and then, ultimately, as a peer. Mentors don't tell you what you want to hear, but what you need to hear. Mentors don't stifle your growth by placing their own rigid construct around you. Rather, they offer possibilities, interwoven with role models that can provide much-needed guidance, and that are sufficiently flexible to enable you to evolve in ways that are unexpected. Irwin did all of this for me (and many, many others), and much more. How fitting that he was awarded the AADR's first Mentorship Award in 2010.

Irwin's command of the literature was legendary—it was always great fun when he gently reminded speakers about the content of their own papers! He was always sending me papers from journals I had never heard of. And when I would call to talk to him about a paper he sent, the discussion led to him sending me more papers that I never would have otherwise been exposed to.

In the interest of full disclosure, over the years Irwin also sent me numerous suggestions of books of fiction to read. He tried so hard to encourage me to be more rounded intellectually (and less round in terms of my physical state). The fact that I almost never found the time to follow up on these suggestions disappointed him, and he eventually gave up on this aspect of my personal development. How he found time to absorb and contribute to both science and the arts has never ceased to amaze me.

Although I eventually forged a successful academic career, Irwin constantly reminded me that success often yields complacency. At his (not so gentle) prodding, I eventually left the safety of a dental school environment to join a medical school (where I found myself as a small fish in a large pond). With time, I was able to learn much from my new colleagues and ultimately greatly expand the types of scientific questions I was willing to tackle. After a decade, my career took a bit of an unexpected turn when I was asked to become the research dean of the Medical Center. Irwin was one of the very few persons who thought this was a great idea. He pointed out that there are many dentists who become deans of dental schools, but a dentist as a (research) dean of a medical school—that was an exciting new recipe! In retrospect, it was that experience that helped prepare me for my move to the NIH as the director of the National

Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research. The decision to join NIH was a complicated one, but Irwin's enormous pride in and caring for the dental profession had become a part of me, making it clear that it was time to accept a new set of challenges and work on behalf of the profession and field.

The only possible way to help fill the void that his passing has created is to try to emulate Irwin going forward. For those of us whose personal and professional lives were made better by Irwin, we are so very grateful to Irwin's wife (and noted poet) Charlotte Mandel, and their children Carol, Nora, and Richard, for sharing him with us.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## REFERENCES

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