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BERNARD N. FIELDS

Transcript of an interview  
Conducted by

Sondra Schlesinger

on

8 December 1992

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## BERNARD N. FIELDS

1938 Born in Brooklyn, New York, on March 24  
1995 Died in West Newtown, Massachusetts, on January 31

### Education

1958 A.B., biology, Brandeis University  
1962 M.D., New York University School of Medicine

### Professional Experience

National Communicable Disease Center, Atlanta, Georgia  
1965-1966 Medical Virologist, Virology Section  
1966-1967 Assistant Chief, Arbovirus Infectious Unit

Albert Einstein College of Medicine  
1967-1968 Postdoctoral Fellow, Department of Cell Biology  
1968-1969 Associate, Departments of Medicine and Cell Biology  
1969-1971 Assistant Professor, Departments of Medicine and Cell Biology  
1971-1975 Associate Professor, Departments of Medicine and Cell Biology

Harvard Medical School  
1975-1994 Professor of Microbiology and Molecular Genetics  
1981-1994 Professor of Medicine  
1982-1994 Chairman, Department of Microbiology and Molecular Genetics  
1984-1994 Adele H. Lehman Professor of Microbiology and Molecular Genetics

1976-1994 Associate Editor, *Journal of Infectious Diseases*

1977 Visiting Professor, Washington University

### Honors

1962 Founders' Day Award, New York University School of Medicine  
1974-1979 Irma T. Hirschl Scholar Award  
1974 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Redway Medal (with Cedric Raine)  
1974-1975 Career Scientist, Health Research Council of New York

- 1982 Solomon A. Berson Alumni Achievement Award, New York  
University School of Medicine
- 1982 Wellcome Lecturer, American Society of Microbiology
- 1983 Lippard Lecturer, Columbia University
- 1984 Thayer Lecturer, The Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine
- 1987 Dyer Lecturer, National Institutes of Health
- 1987-1995 Merit Award, National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases
- 1989 Niels Dungal Memorial Lecturer, University of Iceland, Reykjavik
- 1991 Dudley Wright Lecturer, Arolla, Switzerland
- 1992 Alumni Achievement Award, Brandeis University

## ABSTRACT

Bernard Fields begins the interview with a discussion of his early years, growing up in Brooklyn, New York. Fields was encouraged by his parents to excel in scholastic endeavors. After graduating high school at the age of sixteen, Fields enrolled at Brandeis University. After a mediocre start, he finished college at the top of his class, receiving an A.B. in biology in 1958. Fields loved biology and wanted to become an M.D. He attended New York University School of Medicine, earning his M.D. in 1962. While at NYU, Fields first became interested in neuroscience and how diseases affect the central nervous system. He then received an internship with Beth Israel Hospital in Boston, where he became involved in infectious diseases. After completing his doctoral training, Fields took a fellowship in infectious diseases with Mort Swartz at Massachusetts General Hospital. Infectious diseases fascinated Fields and he began to move toward a career in microbiology and virology. In 1967, after two years of military service in Atlanta, Georgia, with the Centers for Disease Control, Fields moved back to New York with his new wife and three stepchildren, accepting a research fellowship with Wolfgang K. Joklik at Albert Einstein College of Medicine. While at Einstein, Fields began research on Reovirus, which would become one of his life-long research projects. His research focused on the genetics of Reovirus and how the virus interacted with animal cells. In 1969, Fields became Associate Professor of Medicine and Cell Biology at Einstein, and held that position until 1975, when he joined the faculty at Harvard Medical School as Head of Infectious Diseases. With his research fellows, Fields studied different strains of Reovirus and how they mutated to cause different diseases. Fields became Chairman of the Microbiology and Molecular Genetics Department at Harvard in 1982, ending his extensive research in infectious diseases just as AIDS hit the world scene. Fields concludes the interview with a discussion of the future of biological research, developing working relationships with students, and his personal battle with pancreatic cancer.

## INTERVIEWER

Sondra Schlesinger is Professor of Molecular Microbiology at Washington University School of Medicine. She received her Ph.D. in Biological Chemistry from the University of Michigan. She joined the faculty at Washington University in 1964, where initially she continued her research in the field of microbial genetics and physiology. In the early 1970s she began her research work on the structure and replication of animal RNA viruses, which continues to this day. Dr. Schlesinger has over one hundred publications spanning these areas of microbiology. She was President of the American Society for Virology in 1992-1993, at which time she began her present interest and work in the history of virology.

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10	Early Career	Military Services at Centers for Disease Control. Field work. Marriage to Ruth Peedin. Research fellowship at Albert Einstein College of Medicine. Wolfgang K. Joklik. First studies on Reovirus. Viral genetics research. Learning molecular biology. Infectious disease unit.
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## NOTES

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