



## Susan MJ Dunn (1954-2011)

Dr. Susan Dunn, Professor and Chair of Pharmacology, and Professor of Neuroscience at the University of Alberta died unexpectedly on February 18th, 2011. She was 57 years old.

Susan was born and raised in Edinburgh. After gaining a First class Honours degree in Biochemistry at the University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, in 1975 she went on to obtain her PhD in Molecular Pharmacology for studies on dihydrofolate reductase kinetics at MRC National Institute for Medical Research, London, under the mentorship of Dr. Rod King. However, it was her introduction to studies of the nicotinic acetylcholine receptor in the laboratory of Professor Michael Raftery, FRS, at the California Institute of Technology, Pasadena that established her continuing and overwhelming interest in these complex and intriguing proteins. It must have been an exciting time for Susan. Just two years after she joined this laboratory, it published the first sequencing information that set the stage for our current understanding of the structural organization of this important class of oligomeric membrane-spanning proteins.

After a brief sojourn in the laboratory of Professor Eric Barnard, FRS, Imperial College London, she returned as a Research Associate to Michael Raftery's laboratory for nearly three years before taking up her first academic appointment at the University of Iowa in 1985 as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Physiology and Biophysics. She was recruited to the Department of Pharmacology at the University of Alberta, Edmonton in 1988. With the exception of a sabbatical leave to Dundee, from 1997-98 and a two year leave of absence to the University of Bristol, 2001-03 she has remained at the University of Alberta until her death. She was promoted to full professorship in 1993 and served as Deputy Chair of the Department from 2003 until 2008, when she was appointed to the Chair in Pharmacology.

Throughout her career, Susan was beguiled by the kinetic aspects of ligand interactions and their conformational consequences on protein function, particularly within the cys-loop ligand gated ion channel family. She developed a significant reputation for her insights into the subtleties of

these interactions and she was in constant demand as a reviewer of both grants and manuscripts. Her reputation for acuity and fairness was rare indeed. As a leader of laboratory or department she had a sureness of purpose that inspired student and colleague alike; we will miss that gentle comment and guidance and be thankful that we listened.

Research may have been her primary passion, but she was able to disseminate her discoveries and those of others with a clarity and enthusiasm that earned her respect as a teacher and yielded a devoted following of students fortunate enough to have been in her classes.

She is survived by her parents, Jack and Ruth, her sisters Gillian and Jennifer and brother John, together with their families in Troon, Scotland.

**Bill Dryden and Ian Martin**