

Richard J Levine, MD an outstanding physician-researcher died on April 12th, 2011 in Washington DC at the age of 71. Dr. Levine made significant contributions to our understanding of preeclampsia during the last two decades of his productive career, and while battling a devastating disease during the last three years of his life he continued to work tirelessly on problems important for the health of pregnant women and their unborn children. In fact his published results have appeared as late as January of this year, and he was working on new manuscripts at the time of his death.

Richard, a physician, was a renowned epidemiologist who had an amazing and highly varied career. A Peace Corps volunteer in Iran before embarking on an epidemiologic career, he next served as an Epidemic Intelligence Service Officer with the Centers for Disease Control. Stationed in Bangladesh, he documented that the effluent from a cholera hospital was responsible for spread of disease to the surrounding villages. Next posted to the health department in the State of Alabama he documented occupational lead poisoning at a smelter, and also investigated an outbreak of headache, nausea, weakness, dizziness and fainting in a high school band, correctly diagnosing epidemic hysteria. (Indeed, this diagnosis gained him recognition as a leading expert in this condition at that time.) Dick moved on to the Chemical Industry Institute of Technology in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina, where he studied male fertility. However the greatest achievements of his career were yet to come. In 1991 he joined the Epidemiology Branch of the National Institute of Health's Child Health and Development Division where for the next 20 years he would focus on pregnancy research. Discovering how devastating a disease preeclampsia can be and that it was still a major cause of maternal and fetal mortality, and how neglected research and the funding was in this area, he spent the rest of his career working on problems relating to preeclampsia. During the 1990s he led the first major multicenter trial to determine if calcium supplementation could prevent preeclampsia. This work inspired others, and today the World Health Organization is embarking on both preventative and therapeutic calcium projects in countries where calcium intake is low.

Richard's insight to store samples from his study performed in the 1990s led to his more recent signal studies demonstrating that measuring levels of certain proteins called antiangiogenic factors in maternal blood could predict preeclampsia before it manifested clinically, especially the more devastating early-onset preeclampsia. Other work suggested a link, albeit small, between preeclampsia and the development of hypothyroidism later in life. And in work published in January 2011, he joined a team that has clarified relationships between obesity and preeclampsia.

Finally, his wife Verena, an artist, and two daughters, Adele and Nicole, who were proud of and encouraged his work, survive Richard, and we extend our condolences to them. We have lost a good friend and a tireless worker in areas so important to the health of pregnant women and their unborn children. [Read more about Richard Levine's contributions to preeclampsia research on the NICHD website.](#)

Contributed on behalf of the Preeclampsia Foundation by S. Ananth Karumanchi, MD, Marshall D. Lindheimer, MD, Baha Sibai, MD, Medical Advisory Board.