

ATVB Named Lecture Reviews—Insight Into Author



ATVB Named Lecture Reviews—2017 George Lyman Duff Memorial Lecture

Insight Into the Author: Ira J. Goldberg, MD, Division of Endocrinology, Diabetes, and Metabolism, Department of Medicine, New York University School of Medicine, New York

Why did you choose the profession of scientific investigation?

I was fortunate to have attended several of the best universities in the country. I wouldn't have been able to do that without help from the US government, which at that time contributed a large amount of money to science education. In medical school, we were encouraged to view ourselves as physicians, investigators, and teachers. My role models emphasized not only patient care, but also the constant improvement of care and the passing on of knowledge and ethos to the physicians who would follow us.

Who have been your role model(s) in your scientific and professional life?

I think that during my research time as a fellow I was fortunate enough to be with several physician/scientists (Virgil Brown and Henry Ginsberg) who infected me with the sense of excitement that comes with discovery. As an assistant professor at Columbia, DeWitt Goodman, Alan Tall, and then Henry Ginsberg (again) taught me the business of being a scientist, including such necessities as how to write grants, how to analyze your own science, your writing, and your presentations.

What have been important influences on your professional life?

My primary interest had initially been in diabetes and glucose metabolism. My introduction to lipid metabolism came as a research fellow. This occurred in a time of tremendous and exciting advances when we, as a field, were learning about the metabolism of circulating lipoproteins and the enzymes responsible for this.

What are your scientific inspirations?

I think that every one of my generation was inspired by the LDL receptor discoveries from the Brown and Goldstein laboratory, who illustrated that studying a human genetic condition could lead to fundamental insights into biology.

Other contemporary investigators defined the roles of individual apoproteins, how human lipoprotein metabolism was regulated with diets and disease, the roles of lipoprotein metabolic enzymes and receptors for apoE and HDL. When Breslow and Maeda created atherosclerosis in mice, it pioneered the use of genetically modified animals and gave physiologists, like me, new methods to interrogate pathways involved in normal metabolism and creation of disease.

How have mentors contributed to your professional development?

We all need to be taught and encouraged. My close mentors taught me to express myself, challenged my assumptions, and improved my science. But aside from them, I can still remember how thrilling (I cannot think of a better word) to me it was to me each time a senior scientist whose work I had admired said hello to me at a meeting.

If you knew then what you know now, would you do anything different?

Hmm, maybe I would have become a geneticist. Certainly, I would not have traded this career for any other that I can think of.

What wisdom do you impart on new investigators?

The depressing times, when nothing goes right, is what makes the successes so much sweeter. Sometimes, to be a successful scientist, you just need to survive.

If you were not a scientist, which profession would you pick?

Well, clearly, I would have been a practicing physician (which I am still to some degree). Do I get to pick things like being the center fielder on the Yankees?

Which direction do you envisage your science taking?

I have always had a goal that my work would someday lead to new treatments for disease. We have plans for experiments that hopefully will do this.

What are your nonscientific activities?

I love to ski. I am running a lot less, as my joints need more oiling. I cook, read (mostly history).

What sports do you follow?

Not so many, and only on occasion. I could not help but follow the Columbia football team this year. Last week, I watched the US Nationals for ice skating.

What are your favorite foods and are they heart healthy?

I could be a total vegetarian, but I am not. My wife and I often cook our versions of Chinese and Indian food. So yes, hard to spend so much of my life doing lipid/atherosclerosis research and still eat the food I ate as a child and that contributed by my father's heart attack at age 60.

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