

Accolades for and Appreciation of Dr. Martin Lerner

I was very pleased to solicit Martin's contributions for a chapter in a handbook I edited over a decade ago, and that began a long satisfying and productive friendship. Over the past decade, we collaborated on several publications, and we even tried with Ron Glaser to obtain a NIH grant to conduct a randomized trial with his anti-viral protocol, but we never were able to obtain a fundable score on that effort. Martin was compassionate, caring, and brilliant. So few people have this set of characteristics, and I always felt privileged to be able to talk with him about his new innovative ideas about how to help patients with ME. He will be missed by his patients, by his friends, and by the larger ME community. ([Leonard Jason, PhD](#))

I was a patient of Dr. Lerner's for almost 2 years. I had been struggling for so long, and it was wonderful to be under the care of a doctor who took me seriously and tried so hard to help. I am certain Dr. Lerner's legacy will include a great many patients who are so grateful for his unwavering dedication. ([Sue P., Toronto, Canada](#))

Dr. Lerner was my ME/CFS doctor and my friend. He was a clinician, a researcher, a family man and a friend to many.

He was humble, gentle, generous and put his patients' safety above all else. He was the first ME/CFS doctor I went to after being ill for almost a year. He calmed my fears when I was scared, and gave me hope when I wavered. He did this for so many patients and their families. All while continuing to research, publish, speak, serve wherever he was called. Even when he got sick.

On a personal note, I will most miss how he would answer the phone when I'd call the office to discuss an opportunity for his foundation. "Helloooo? Oh Ann, it's so nice to hear your voice!" He'd say it with such kindness and you just knew he meant it.

I miss him greatly. What an unbelievable loss, personally, and for the ME/CFS community. ([Ann M Cavanagh Kramer, Salt Lake City, UT](#))

Just by luck I lived 1.5 hours from Dr. Lerner's office. He was among a handful of doctors that specialized in ME/CFS nationwide. He was and remains the only doctor who I have seen that has provided me with useful testing and treatment. His dedicated work with ME/CFS patients lead him to understanding many aspects of a very under researched and misunderstood illness. He revealed certain aspects of the immune dysfunction occurring and development of certain viruses. I have two viruses. He is the only doctor I saw who tested for them, and I have seen quite a few. He understood the complex nature of the illness and offered treatment specially related to the viral condition. Today, I have an internal specialist who has some understanding but offers no treatment/s specifically for ME/CFS. My doctor today trusts me and believes in the disease but due to the limited knowledge of the medical community, lack of education and research he is at a loss for what to do specifically, including testing. He tests only to rule out all other illnesses. With my own research I am left to recommend to my doctor what is the best treatment plan. Dr. Lerner offered specific ME/CFS testing and treatment that more closely looked for and treated core symptoms of the illness. Many thanks to him. Not having him here is a great loss for the ME/CFS community of 1-2 million people. We need more doctors who

specialize in treating ME/CFS, but they must have more accurate information and training, like Dr. Lerner did. ([Anonymous](#))

I was hospitalized with acute myocarditis mimicking myocardial infarction following a rare mononucleosis-like illness as an adult. At the time I was hospitalized, I was experiencing incapacitating chest pain, dyspnea, syncopal episodes, and was non-ambulatory. I was told in hospital that antiviral and immunosuppressive therapy was of no proven benefit in myocarditis. However, Dr. Lerner noted that my cardiac symptoms began following a mononucleosis-like illness and that herpesviruses other than EBV are frequently the cause of such infections. Such herpesvirus can also cause myocarditis according to European researchers. Dr. Lerner found that I had a four-fold increase in titer to one herpesvirus and placed me on valganciclovir. I experienced a marked reduction in my cardiac symptoms and was able to become ambulatory again. Given how rare myocarditis is, and the lack of scientific consensus on its diagnosis and treatment, I have no doubt that I would not have received proper treatment without Dr. Lerner. ([RB](#))

Dr. Lerner was the last of his kind. Most doctors are in it for the money. Dr. Lerner was definitely in the profession to help people. Besides the countless M.E. patients whose lives he saved, I personally know a patient of his that did not have M.E. who would have died without his experience, knowledge and aggressive treatment.

I could say so much about the huge positive improvement in my health and wellbeing because of Dr. Lerner, however, sometimes it's little things like the anecdote below that is the real measure of a man...

When a little M.E. advocacy organization that I belonged to, called RESCIND, was still active, we did a report on the 2008 Baltimore HHV-6 conference. Since accomplishing our main goal of creating an M.E. awareness day, the organization had withered to just Tom [Hennessy] and I. We both figured there would be enough bloggers there to report on the conference so there really was no need for us to send a representative... until I told Tom that Dr. Lerner was going to be there! So, despite being a bad day for Tom, he went to see the man that I had told him so much about.

Tom called me that night when he got home and told me what a gentleman Dr. Lerner was. Not that I didn't already know it! He told me how after meeting Tom earlier in the day, Dr. Lerner noticed Tom at the dinner, pulled out the chair next to him and patted the seat for Tom to sit beside him.

And this is what Tom was privy to at that table in his words... "World Class MIT, Harvard, NIH alumnus, Dr. Martin Lerner was there. I caught him conversing with the folks from Roche Pharmaceuticals. He explained to them about how they must choose their patient cohorts very carefully. They must watch out for confounding infections like Lyme Disease or other bacterial or enterovirus co-infections. He tried to get Roche pharmaceuticals interested in follow up trials with Dr. Montoya and other docs. They need to show consistent, reproducible, quantifiable results to people who do not believe that we are physically ill!"

At every office visit Dr. Lerner would always ask me how my wife was doing. From then on, Dr. Lerner would always ask how both my wife and Tom were doing. He was that kind of guy. He didn't know much about RESCIND and he had only met Tom that one weekend but he knew Tom was my friend and cared enough to always ask about the people in my life.

When I told Dr. Lerner that Tom had passed away, he was genuinely upset. Not for me. Not for Tom. But he was saddened for all three of us.

(Jerry Greyson)

Dr. Lerner saved my life and restored the quality of my life. I suffered from totally debilitating CFS/ME. Four of my doctors had told me that I might not live more than one year and that my wife and I would be wise to move to be closer to our daughter and her family. Once we moved to be our daughter, and prepare for my last days, I sought help from Dr. Lerner at his "Treatment Center for CFS."

Within 8 months of my first visit with Dr. Lerner and starting his treatment, my energy level went from almost zero to 75% of my pre-CFS/ME days. Much of my "brain fog" was lifted and I had a vigor for living life that I had not experienced in over a decade.

For me, Dr. Lerner will always be my Jonas Salk for my CFS/ME. Working well into his 80's, he labored tirelessly pioneering better tests and treatments for CFSers who he found to have a viral-based infection.

In 1990, at age 46, Mayo Clinic diagnosed me with CFS. Nine years later, in 1999, CFS forced me into early retirement. It was after a severe drop in my health from 1999-2006 that my wife and I moved from Eastern Tennessee, where we had retired, to Michigan.

Now at 71, my family and I are forever deeply thankful to Dr. Lerner for his dedication to developing tests and finding viral-based pharmaceutical treatments for patients, like me, who have CFS/ME.

(Tim Ruddleston, Michigan)

I have been a patient of Dr. Lerner's for over 20 years. Even though I always knew the day of his passing would come, I am still in shock and feel "untethered" and so alone and lost. He was the only Dr. who has understood what I go through and could tie everything together.

I am still to raw and hurting to explain and articulately write about Dr. Lerner. How do you sum up over 20 years of seeing someone? My monthly visits over those 20 years went beyond a Dr./patient relationship. He was a grandfather figure to me. He gave me support and hope during the ending of an abusive marriage. He encouraged me to fight for my children's health. He intervened numerous times on medical issues that were beyond his "scope of practice" He visited me in the hospital, on his day off, in regular clothes, with out his long white lab coat, just to make sure I was doing ok. I wasn't there for anything related to ME/CFS, but he had to fight to get me admitted as the hospital would not listen to what was going on with me. He had most probable saved me life that week.

Dr. Lerner was an amazing diagnostician. Twice he caught acute rare illness that other Dr. had blew off and sent me to the best specialist with letters of his concerns. They were impressed and were able to provide appropriate long term care. He looked at all my illness, not just the ones that were ME/CFS related, and knew how they inter-played and how treatment needed to be adjusted. He provided anti-viral treatments that allowed me to go back to work full-time and have a near normal

life with my kids at the time in their development stages when they needed an active mom. When I had to go off the treatment, he did not give up on me. He continued to stay positive, and give me hope of new treatments.

I don't want to waste me spoons on his knowledge though, as that is well known. I want to share about the compassionate man he was.

He always asked and was genuinely concerned about the health of my daughter. He had meet her several times and knew she had ulcerated colitis and was not responding well to treatment. He had seen her as a patient to make sure it was not aggravated with CMV or EBV. Her GI would not even discuss the possibility with me when I presented journal articles. Dr. Lerner knew immediately of my concerns, and he had them as well. My last visit with him, he still asked about how she was doing.

He was excited for me when I got remarried. My husband was always so surprised when Dr. Lerner would tell him "Thank you for taking care of Donna". Dr. Lerner said it as it was a personal favor to him. Dr. Lerner always talked about patients needing family support and how hard this illness was on marriages. He wanted my spouse to make sure he knew he was appreciated.

Dr. Lerner was like a little child when I would bring up the IOM. His eyes would twinkle and would say "You know I can not talk about it? But big things are going to happen." So I would share what I knew and he would just smile. His passion for hope and change were infectious and I had no doubt the IOM WAS going to be the turning point for us patients. I wish he would have been alive to see the announcements with the NIH, but I think deep down he already knew things were going to change.

Dr. Lerner had worked so hard to understand ME/CFS. He was a pioneer at making new discoveries and treatment plans that many did not understand. Some feel he took risks. Isn't that always the case with new discoveries and treatment? I was always one who was eager for new treatments and was willing to accept the risk. When you are so sick, does it really matter? To make a difference to a generation behind me, gave me a purpose and reason for having this illness. I was one of the lucky ones who responded to his new treatments when ever he tried something new.

It is easier to fight change then learn about it, and he dealt with that from other doctors and insurance companies daily. I know this was very frustrating for him. He fought very hard on behalf of his patients. All he wanted to do was treat people and find a cure, or at least a bio-marker. He was not willing to just mask the illness with band-aid treatment, but get to the source with his anti-virals. He had a very rough road from many of his colleagues. He took a lot for us patients and I will be forever indebted to him.

I am sure it must have been hard to be a child or spouse of Dr. Lerner. He always put his patients first, and it was probable hard to understand. I know his time was a loss to you, but so many people have benefited due to his diligence and dedication to our illness. I thank you for the sacrifices you have given us.

My first son, Steven, was 9 months old when I first met Dr. Lerner. This spring Steven graduates college as an engineer and gets married in August. He has so much hope and potential. He is at the start of his life. Steven is the exact age I was when I first met Dr. Lerner. Life comes full circle.

I still do not go a day without thinking of Dr. Lerner. I find myself finding new things related to our illness I want to share with him, or things about my life I knew he would be happy for. Since attending Dr. Lerner's funeral, I feel alone in the depth of this illness, and hopeless, as I will only receive band-aid treatment anymore. I no longer have the assurance that no matter what is wrong with me, Dr. Lerner will figure it out. But most of all, I miss his smile and the twinkle in his eyes. I

miss his compassion and his love. I miss his hope and friendship. Dr. Lerner will always hold a special place in my heart.

(Donna Robillard, Lewiston, Michigan)

I was a patient of Dr. Lerner. I had been profoundly ill for quite some time with what was labeled as CFS. I went from doctor to doctor and was treated like a medical pariah, dismissed and blown off. I finally found Dr. Lerner and not only was I correctly diagnosed but he had a plan to treat me. During my time with Dr. Lerner I was on his Vistide/Cidofovir protocol and I can tell you with utmost certainty, Dr. Lerner saved my life and gave me a better quality of life. He was compassionate, kind and a brilliant diagnostician. I am eternally grateful to him and his dedication to a patient population that is marginalized and ignored. I can only hope that someone takes what Dr. Lerner has done and decides to help us. His legacy needs to be respected and carried on. There are too many of us who are sick and ignored. Dr. Lerner's passing has left a giant void for many of us who had no where else to turn.

(KNO, Michigan)