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Tribute to John T. Povlishock, PhD

Reference:

Bailes Julian E., Bramlett Helen M., Brody David L., Buki Andras, Bullock Ross, Dietrich W. Dalton, Dixon Ed, Gao Guoyi, Germano Nino, Hall Edward D.,-
Tribute to John T. Povlishock, PhD
Journal of neurotrauma - ISSN 0897-7151 - New rochelle, Mary ann liebert, inc, 38:4(2021), p. 1890-1903
Full text (Publisher's DOI): <https://doi.org/10.1089/NEU.2021.29113.JTP.TRIBUTE>
To cite this reference: <https://hdl.handle.net/10067/1791610151162165141>

John Povlishock: Tribute from an international neurosurgeon and TBI researcher

I first met John – an occasion he will likely not recall – when I visited MCV in Richmond in 1983 at a time when I was still a senior resident in Neurosurgery. Already then, he made a deep impression, especially as being a very approachable person. Over the years, as I matured as Neurosurgeon and became more experienced in TBI research, contacts intensified and a true friendship developed, for which I am extremely grateful. John has always been most supportive and open to new ideas and innovations. As Chief Editor of J. Neurotrauma, he facilitated the publication of a series of manuscripts on prognostic analysis of TBI in 2007 which resulted from the NIH-NINDS funded IMPACT studies (International Mission for Prognosis and Analysis of Clinical Trials in TBI: <http://www.tbi-impact.org>). Following implementation of the CENTER-TBI project (Collaborative European NeuroTrauma Effectiveness Research: www.center-tbi.eu), he agreed to create a new category of manuscripts, Living Systematic Reviews. These living reviews start as a “traditional” systematic review but then enter a cycle of continuous literature searches and updating. This novel approach was pioneered by the CENTER-TBI project in collaboration with the Publisher and Editor of J. Neurotrauma, and later taken forward by the Cochrane collaboration.

Over the years, my appreciation for John as a scientist, politician, diplomat and as a person only increased. True friendship developed in the course of many trips to China, where we were invited as Faculty to the China Head Forum, organized annually by our colleagues and mutual friends Prof Ji-Yao Jiang and Dr Guoyi Gao, who previously had spent time in Richmond. These visits always provided occasions to visit the multiple cultural highlights of China and to socialize across the round table of continuously evolving Chinese food. It was during one of these occasions (2010) that I – likely under the influence of the traditional Chinese Moutai drink, served at every dinner, – jokingly referred to John as the “Laughing Buddha”. To this day, I am not sure if he has ever forgiven me for that. However, it was intended as a compliment: A jolly nature, happiness, content and humorous personality are characteristics of both John and the laughing Buddha. Laughing Buddha was known for excitingly entertaining the adoring children that followed him, like John does his students and followers. His unique capability to make complex matters appear simple is a gift many may envy.

I still consider myself one of John’s disciples and am very grateful for the many scientific, philosophical and cultural lessons he has taught me, and hope I may enjoy his continuing education and friendship for many years to come!

I don’t envy the task of the new Editor-in-Chief for J. Neurotrauma – John has set the bar in terms of dedication and performance so high that his standards are nearly impossible to meet. I wish David all success in his brave endeavor to succeed John.



Andrew I.R. Maas