

Obituary

Douglas M. McNair, Ph.D.



Douglas M. McNair, Ph.D., died on June 4, 2008. He was accepted into the College in 1966 and was a Fellow Emeritus.

Doug, a Tar Heel born and bred, did his undergraduate work at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill. I was privileged to be his friend and colleague since 1948 when we were graduate students together at UNC. When he joined me at Boston University in 1964 it was the beginning of his most intensive work with the *Profile of Mood States* (POMS).

It should be recalled that in the mid-1960's and 1970's clinical psychopharmacology was basically just getting off the ground with the new psychoactive drugs, particularly anti-anxiety and anti-depressant compounds. We were on the threshold of belatedly but finally bringing a sense of scientific methodology to the discipline of psychiatry. We had the experimental meds; we were quickly learning to appreciate the concept of controlled clinical trials; and we had the perplexing problem of patients who, in most instances, could only present with their subjective

reports. But we had no quantitative and valid instruments to measure with any reliability possible drug-induced changes in these reports.

And then came the Manual for the POMS, developed and continually refined by Doug and his colleagues. They empirically confirmed the existence of six mood or affective state factors: Tension-Anxiety, Depression-Dejection, Anger-Hostility, Vigor-Activity, Fatigue-Inertia, and Confusion-Bewilderment. They also determined for these factors their internal consistency, test-retest reliability and sensitivity for measuring the effects of various interventions. Over time, as norms were also obtained for psychiatric outpatients as well as normal individuals, the POMS became the international standard for measuring mood changes.

During the many years I knew this remarkable man, I had nothing but total respect and admiration for his intelligence, dedication, modesty, and integrity. He was an avid reader who hated ambiguity and wrote with precision. His research was always impeccable – when Doug published a paper, you could take the results to the bank. His students, his staff, his friends venerated him, and I always saw him as the favorite brother I never had.

Many of the ACNP membership may not have known him, for he was a quiet, unassuming and unobtrusive individual –

actually, quite shy. However, If you were one of the lucky ones, you will remember him not only as a gifted researcher, but also as a wondrous human being. Above all, as his beloved wife, Sally, said simply, “He was a good man.” Yes, that he was.

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