



A Tribute to Rich Saitz

A Leader in the Addictions Field and Exemplary Mentor, Human Being, Friend

Rich Saitz, MD, MPH, Boston University Professor of Medicine (General Internal Medicine) and School of Public Health Professor & Chair of Community Health Sciences since 2014, passed away in January from pancreatic cancer. He was 58. Rich had an international reputation in both alcohol and drug addiction research. His mantra was “follow the evidence.” His leadership in the addiction world was manifested in many roles, including editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Addiction Medicine*, an editor of *The ASAM Principles of Addiction Medicine*, CTN lead investigator at BU as part of the New England Consortium Node, and former president of AMERSA, in addition to numerous honors and awards. He was a wonderful friend, colleague and mentor to many. We will miss his energy, spirit and wisdom. Fortunately, we have a legacy of his contributions to our field to appreciate in the years ahead.

-Jeffrey Samet

I met Rich in medical school. We could not have been more different then. He as I affectionately called, “A 6-year Nerd,” barely out of high school, joined the medical school Class of ‘84 just after 2 years of all year-round undergraduate school. And I, the Ancient one, joining the class after 10 years of work and what can I say...life. We ended up on the same CCU rotation as interns at Boston City Hospital. We had one thing in common, Dr. Jeff Samet, as our Chief Resident. We would go on to be close colleagues, each with an interest in helping vulnerable populations, specifically those with substance use disorders. We magically obtained similar NIH grants in tandem, only in different settings, both successful in our respective fields. We would catch up on life at national meetings and engage in constant discussions on what really was the evidence? The “absence of evidence is not the evidence of absence,” I would argue. In the end the best part was sharing the martini du jour and sampling the best restaurants in town. Rich was such a foody.

I had the wonderful opportunity to have a 5-hour dinner with Rich this past October, as ACEP was in Boston. Interestingly, he forgot about our age difference, YES! I remember that dinner with Rich was a huge event; multiple courses, and all paired with the finest of wines. We were in it for the long haul and the conversations.

I will miss you, my friend. You were taken from us way too soon.

-Gail D’Onofrio

